

HIGHER
EDUCATION IN BENGAL
UNDER BRITISH RULE.

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PREFACE

About a year ago the Governing Body of this College discussed the desirability of introducing short vocational courses to supplement those that the students were taking for their university examinations. The discussion aroused some measure of interest in the subject outside the walls of the institution, and the view was expressed in certain quarters that the time had come for superseding as far as possible literary education by a study of the exact sciences and that technical training must be fruitless unless it was preceded by a thorough knowledge of these. An attempt has been made in the following pages to combat this opinion by pointing out what literary studies have done for the community and may still do for it if properly directed and supplemented. So the scope of the book is limited. But this is hardly a disadvantage, for it is impossible to do justice to the manifold aspects of the educational problem within the limits of a short treatise.

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CHAPTER I.

THE FATE OF ORIENTALISM

It was not an English school but a seminary of oriental learning that our English rulers set up when our educational needs first claimed their attention. This was the Calcutta Madrassah which was founded by Warren Hastings in 1781 with a twofold object in view. Regard for Islamic culture appeared to be a legitimate means of conciliating the Muhammadans who had been till lately the ruling race in the land, while the establishment of an academy was considered the most feasible way of showing this regard because of the presence just then in the city of a Professor of repute who might be entrusted with the work of instruction. But he expected also that it would keep up the supply of scholars versed in Muslim law whose assistance was needed then for the proper administration of justice. So public patronage came to be extended to the institution in no stinted measure. Its success, however, was not striking, and it failed inspite of repeated attempts at improvement to attain the object of the founder to the extent of his expectations.* But the return of goodwill and con-

* The Bengal Government assigned lands of the value of Rs 29,000 a year for the support of the institution. In

fidence that it secured for the rulers at its inception amply justified his liberal policy

The institution was meant originally for the gratuitous instruction of a small number of respectable and literate Musalmans in all that might be needed to fit them for their proper place in society. Hence admission came to be restricted to students who knew Persian well and had acquired a certain degree of familiarity with Arabic in which their subsequent education was to be conducted. This intellectual elite had steadily lost ground since the break up of the Mogul empire. But there was the confident expectation that systematic and thorough training might enable it to come to its own again. What exactly was comprehended in this recovery of lost prestige was not however clearly defined. The representation on which the Governor General acted laid equal stress on the intellectual stamp which it is the prerogative of higher studies to give and on the dignified security of responsible posts

1785 the lands were assigned by sanad to Md Muizuddin the Sijeron and to his successors. In 1788 complaints of grave misconduct were received and the management was assumed by Government. In 1791 the institution was again found to be in a state of disorder and a new superior was appointed and the management placed in the hands of a committee. In 1812 Dr Lumsden reported that the institution was again in a state of inefficiency. In 1818 a similar report was made by the committee—*Memoir of Thomas Fisher* Searcher of the Records originally compiled in 1827

to which they should furnish a passport * And so the educational call of the Madrassah was interpreted as an invitation to the simultaneous pursuit of both ends. But there was an obvious over-

* In the month of September 1780 a petition was presented to me by a considerable number of Mussulmen of credit and learning, who attended in a body for that purpose praying that I would use my influence with a stranger of the name of Mudjd O'din, who was then lately arrived at the Presidency, to persuade him to remain there for the instruction of young students in the Muhammadan law and in such other sciences as are taught in the Muhammadan schools, for which he was represented to be uncommonly qualified They represented that this was a favourable occasion to establish a madrassah or college and Mudjd O'din the fittest person to form and preside in it that Calcutta was already become the seat of a great Empire, and the resort of persons from all parts of Hindustan and Deccan, that it had been the pride of every polished court and the wisdom of every well-regulated Government, both in India and Persia, to promote by such institutions the growth and extension of liberal education, that in India only the traces of them now remain, the decline of learning having accompanied that of the Mogul empire that the numerous offices of our Government, which required men of improved abilities to fill, and the care which had been occasionally observed to select men of the first eminence in the science of jurisprudence to officiate as judges in the criminal and assessors in the civil courts of judicature and the benefit which generally prevailed that men so accomplished usually met with a distinguished reception from myself, afforded them particular encouragement to hope that a proposition of this nature would prove acceptable to the actual government.—*Minute by the Governor-General, Warren Hastings, dated the 17th April, 1781.*

emphasis of the practical object in the hope expressed by the founder that the knowledge sought to be conveyed should enable Muhammadans to compete on equal terms with the Hindus for employment under Government

Not long after the studies that were dear to the heart of the latter obtained similar recognition in Benares at the instance of Jonathan Duncan. Some of the best years of Duncan's life were spent in putting down certain inhuman practices that were eating into the life of Hindu society. Yet he was not prepared to concede that its revitalisation must involve a surrender of its ancient ideals and aspirations. And he gave practical expression to his belief by founding a Sanskrit College in the strong hold of orthodoxy in 1792. This academy owed much to his fostering care and lived to be an enduring monument of his sympathetic insight into the essentials of Hindu faith and culture. But he was able to plant it on a secure basis only because he had the generous support of the Governor General, Lord Cornwallis in the matter*.

* We entirely approve of the plan of the Hindu College which you have established from the commencement of 1199. Fully and concur in your sentiments respecting the public benefit that may be expected to result from it you will limit the expense of the establishment for the current year to 8000 Rs. 14000 and in the event of the surplus collection not proving adequate to the payment of the amount you have our sanction to issue the deficiency from your treasury. If in consequence of the unfavourableness of the past season there

Here too special importance was attached to the study of the laws and customs of the people. The foreign administrators needed at every step the assistance of men who could authoritatively expound them and so were particularly solicitous about the preservation of this branch of humane learning. But other branches were not lost sight of, as the college was designed "to cultivate the literature and religion as well as the laws of the Hindus." There was some delay in giving full effect to this ambitious programme, as difficulties arose out of the inexperience of the teachers in co-ordinated effort on lines laid down by others. But at last almost every department of the classical lore of Hindustan obtained some measure of recognition, while room was found in the curriculum even for Arabic and Persian, owing presumably to a lingering partiality for them and to the circumstance that a knowledge of the latter was still a qualification for public service. The needs, however, of the speculative intellect were probably set before

should be no surplus collections you will charge the whole expense to the account of Government. From the commencement of the Fussy year 1200 we authorize you to increase the establishment to sicca Rs 20,000/- p a, provided upon the arrival of that period you shall be of opinion that the surplus collections will be adequate to the payment of the amount.—Letter dated 13th January 1792 from the Governor-General in Council to the Resident at Benares, Jonathan Duncan Esq

the requirements of a lucrative career more conspicuously in Benares than in Calcutta

The rules that were laid down for the conduct of these institutions exhibited a certain tenderness for old and unworthy prejudices. And a narrowness of outlook was discernible in the failure to revise and enlarge for them the age-worn curricula of Indian schools. These features of the educational policy of the time have lent colour to the view that it was only an application of the statecraft which aimed at the unsuspecting acquiescence of the dependent population in the new order. The rulers built no doubt, on the expectation that loyalty on their part to the traditions of the subject races would evoke an answering loyalty to them *

* Having in view the surplus revenue expected to be derived from the permanent settlement it appeared to me that a part of those funds could not be applied to more general advantage or with more local propriety than by the institution of a Hindu College or Academy for the preservation and cultivation of the laws literature and religion of that nation in this centre of their faith and the common resort of all their tribes. Two important advantages seemed derivable from such an establishment the first to the British name and nation in its tendency towards endearing our Government to the native Hindus. The second principal advantage will be felt in its effects more immediately by the natives though not without being participated in by the British subjects who are to rule over them by preserving and disseminating a knowledge of the Hindu law.—*Letter No 17 dated 1/1/1792, from Jonathan Duncan Esq Resident at Benares to the Governor-General in Council*

And they feared probably that the leaven of western learning might cause a disquieting ferment in the placid fatalism of the East. But these selfish thoughts were redeemed by their honest conviction that a worthy human existence was quite possible under the moulding influence of eastern ideals and without the complexity of the material conditions which were sought in the West. And in so far as their policy was an embodiment of this faith, it prefigured hopes and wishes that lay at the root of many a notable educational effort in subsequent years.

The studies which were pursued in these colleges were calculated to strengthen the traditional faith and morality and to preserve, if not to improve, the conventions and decencies of Indian life. Conservative influence of this type was of vital importance at the time because in the welter of affairs that had followed the downfall of the Mogul empire, primitive instincts and passions had shaken off their familiar restraints to a certain extent even in respectable society. The influence, however, of these institutions was not very marked, nor did it extend very far. One reason for this was that Muhammadan culture had no great traditions in Lower Bengal, while in Benares ancient prejudice regarded with some suspicion if not with positive alarm the patronage of letters by alien rulers. It had dug a moat deep and wide around the intellectual and spiritual heritage of the Hindu race in

order to maintain intact the privileges of a close corporation and it did not want that the glory of that heritage should fade into the light of the common day. So the progress of oriental learning was slow in spite of State patronage and probably owing also to the incompetence of those who were appointed to impart it.

In the meanwhile education of a very different character assumed an unreasonable importance as a result of the political revolution and the commercial success of the English. In its earliest form it hardly deserved the name and yet it had its attractions for men who wanted to exploit the ignorance of Europeans of Indian life and the Indian dialects by acting as intermediaries in their complex administrative and commercial relations with Indians. Preferring worldly success to light these men equipped themselves for their work by acquiring some knowledge of English. In the absence of facilities for obtaining instruction the information which they could pick up was considerable—a number of English words in common use constituting their stock in trade. But even this minimum of educational outfit answered their purpose fairly well. They prospered in life and their prosperity induced increasing numbers to improve their prospects by acquiring some sort of familiarity with the English tongue.*

* In the earlier days of the East India Company the native manager of an English Agency House and of a ship

The Muhammadans held aloof for a time from this avenue of employment, their hopes and fears conspiring to confirm their attachment to the literature which they had cultivated in other days. For Persian was still the language of the law courts and of important State departments, while much of what was valuable in the thought and aspiration of Mogul India was enshrined in it. And they

captain was called by the natives Mutsuddi and by the Europeans Banian. In fact the Banian in old times was the factotum of houses and captains, and from the absence of any European banking establishment, had the sole charge of all their monetary transactions. In those days the captain, officer, doctor, and even the carpenter and gunner of the Company's Indiamen, used to bring out from England investments of their own for sale at the several Presidency towns in India. A native agent who could make himself understood both to the seller and purchaser was requisite for negotiating for the houses and captains. The high-caste Hindoo who had picked up the little broken colloquy in English, which was a sort of prerogative to him, was the only man then qualified for undertaking such an office of responsibility. In the latter part of the last century legions of high-caste Hindoos preferred their services to the pursers of captains, who acted on board both for the owners of the vessels and captains, and their applications were readily accepted for the sake of their greater respectability and intelligence.—*Good Old Days of Hon'ble John Company, compiled by W. H. Carey*

The establishment of the Supreme Court in 1774 introduced lawyers into the metropolis. They were described by *Asiaticus* as an army of locusts sent to devour the fruits of the earth. But they created opportunities for Bengalis with some knowledge of English who were retained as clerks and agents

were all the more disinclined to abandon its study for that of a foreign tongue as they feared that such a step might compromise their communal exclusiveness. But no such consideration weighed with the Hindus. During Muslim domination they had qualified themselves for service under Government by learning Persian though the ideals and traditions embodied in it were alien to their own. With a similar object they devoted themselves now to the acquisition of English and they did it readily because the new knowledge was not more secular for them than that of Persian had been. But this transfer of allegiance was confined at first to Calcutta and its neighbourhood the study of Persian remaining in vogue elsewhere because it was still practically useful and could be learnt without serious difficulty.

A brief survey of the state of education in the province in the early years of the nineteenth century is necessary here for a just estimate of the bias which western learning received at the outset. There were at the time a large number of primary schools,—the outcome of private enterprise with little or no assistance from the Government.*

* The testimony of William Ward of Serampore is valuable on this point as he was disposed to undervalue all worthy efforts and institutions of the Hindus. In a letter dated 6th January 1870 to the Rt. Hon.ble J. C. Vulliamy he wrote that the village seminaries were numerous that children were taught in them to read by writing that they then proceeded

They were not, indeed, much in evidence in the districts which were peopled mainly by Muhammadan agriculturists or aboriginal races who did not care much for any kind of education. But elsewhere the demand for them was pronounced, and if allowance is made for the depressing influence of the period of unrest and terrific suffering through which the community had just passed, that demand, it must be said, was fairly well met. It showed an appreciation by the community generally of the value of learning as a training for life's work, though this appreciation owed its vitality and vigour to the existence among the Hindus of large classes with whom literacy was a tradition dating from a distant past, a tradition which their members could not ignore without loss of status and influence.

The purpose which these schools were meant to serve was well-defined and thoroughly practical. They taught the pupils to read and write and cast

through the first four rules in Arithmetic and added the copying of a few forms of letters and that the perusal of one or two mythological fables in the common dialect" completed their education.

At a later time (in 1835) W. Adam estimated that there was an elementary school for every 31 or 32 boys in the province. And though he was prepared to admit that his estimate was based on data which were more or less uncertain, yet he was convinced that the system of village schools was extensively prevalent and that the desire to give education to their male children was deeply seated in the minds of parents even of the humblest classes.

accounts and carry on business correspondence And the fee that they charged for such instruction was sometimes graduated according to the means of the learners and often paid in kind Much has been said about their slovenly methods and harsh discipline and an unfair comparison with our present institutions has been occasionally indulged in to show that the minimum of good results was obtained with the maximum of hardship But the things that were taught in them had obvious reference to the needs of the daily life of the learners they were learnt thoroughly and did not slip out of the mind as soon as school days were over and if the process of acquisition was slow there was a sufficient reason for it in the absence of printed books and in fact of suitable juvenile literature in any form and in the comparative inadequacy of the arrangements for teaching in consequence of which the pace was set by the slowest and least advanced among the pupils

Certain features of this education may well claim our attention as indicating a view point different in important respects from our own It was very seldom gratuitous though the charge was low and was always so moderated as to be well within the means of the poorest It was not provided by the State or by religious corporations but was left to private enterprise as the benefit derivable from it was supposed to be entirely personal Yet so deep seated and general was the conviction

in its utility as an equipment for every variety of avocation that neither class exclusiveness nor communal prejudice was allowed to interfere with the catholicity of the arrangements. The Hindu and the Musalman, the Brahmin as well as the low-born Sudra drank from the same reservoir of knowledge, and it never occurred to them that separate vernaculars should be adopted or evolved to accentuate distinctions of race or creed.

Another feature of this elementary education was its intensely secular character. It was secular in its scope and in the agency that was employed to supply it. For the teachers were Kayasthas or men of inferior castes with a sprinkling of Muhammadans among them. The learned Brahmins as well as the Professors of Islamic studies disliked the profession and affected to despise the training. And though they could not do without it, they took care to mark it off with the distinctive brand of worldliness from the higher studies of which they were in charge and for which it was in no sense a preparation. The rudiments of knowledge came therefore to be regarded as a marketable commodity which was in general request only because it was admirably adapted to the petty needs of our ordinary life.

This supercilious attitude towards the early education of the young had a disastrous effect on its content and ideal and on the personal influence of the teachers. For their example and exhortation

could not be very effective in giving the right direction to juvenile impulses and instincts so long as they were regarded as the impecunious purveyors of an inferior commodity. Nor were they expected to implant and nourish the traditional ideas of right and wrong and the accepted notions of moral excellence except in so far as this might be done through an uninspiring introduction of their pupils to one or two episodes from the vernacular versions of the national epics. The instruction which they imparted was thus practically limited to accounts and so tended to narrow the mind instead of creating a diversity of interests that might counteract in later life the cramping influence of occupation and environment. But this serious defect appeared transfigured as a peculiar merit when viewed in the light of the principle on which Hindu society was organised the principle viz., of over-specialisation of classes by which the things of the mind formed the exclusive province of a minority while others were doomed to complete absorption in the affairs of the work a day world. Hence those who occupied the privileged position committed the lordly absurdity of prescribing for their children an education which disparaged the homely needs of ordinary life as much as they were stressed in the education of others.

These children received their first lessons at home where accounts were eschewed and scant attention was paid to the vernacular. After this

preliminary training, they migrated to institutions which were devoted to Sanskritic studies. There they read Grammar, Rhetoric, Literature, Law and Logic or one or more of them. The scope of this education was narrow and unpractical. It did not teach the students to use their eyes and ears to advantage, nor did it furnish them with useful information about the world that they lived in. The starting point was always a minute study of Grammar and Philology, while the goal was an intimate knowledge of the Bengal system of Logic. But many stopt short of this goal and were content with a mastery over less abstruse studies. And even for those, who reached it by virtue of exceptional ability and application, the prize was not knowledge radiant with a diffused light that might point the way to unexplored truths, but proficiency in the showy yet slight art that delights in the multifold splitting of a single hair. So the information which they acquired would compare unfavourably with the attainments of a schoolboy of our time. And it did not cover those branches of learning that have been the glory of Sanskrit literature. Theology, the Vedanta and Yoga systems of philosophy and ancient tradition and history as conserved in the Puranas and kindred works received scant attention in these schools. Even those works of creative art from which as from a perennial source inspiration had passed into the life of the people were read mainly as illustrative of the niceties of Grammar and the canons of

Rhetoric while their great merits as interpretations of life were lost sight of owing to the high brow insistence of learners and teachers on severer but less profitable branches of learning

But the spirit in which this inconsiderable knowledge was acquired and the stamp which it gave to the character of the learners made it a beneficent influence Knowledge whatever its utility might be, was with them a fetish if it came through accredited channels, and its acquisition was viewed in the light of a sacred ceremonial They scorned delights and lived laborious days' for its sake And when they had clutched the fair guerdon they jealously guarded its purity by abjuring worldly ambition Place and office they were forbidden to seek because the rough and tumble in which they were to be sought had a distracting if not a defiling influence on the heart of the scholar They would not work even as ministers of the religion which they professed There was but one social obligation which they recognised and that was to transmit undimmed the torch of knowledge to posterity by imparting instruction without charging for it and by housing and feeding at their own expense those who took it from their lips It was thus only that they could repay the others no inextinguishable debt which they owed to their own preceptors There was doubtless an element of pride and narrowness in their detachment from the world and its concerns But pride has

always been the infirmity of the scholar, and if they had his weakness, they had also and that in the fullest measure his singleness of purpose and indifference to everything that was foreign to it. Education was in itself advancement in life for them, and they strove to be worthy of this advancement by living up to a standard of dignity and purity in manners and conduct that elicited the admiration of people whose ways of living and thinking were widely different from their own.

Their ethics, however, were the ethics of an exclusive class that had succeeded in perpetuating the enthrallment of the popular mind by according its sanction to beliefs, customs and rituals that were strangely at variance with the highest elements and latent possibilities of the culture for which it stood. Hence the difference was generally great in intelligence and in refinement of feeling and character between those who were admitted to the temple of learning and those who had no place in it. But the mischief reacted on the perpetrators, for even the best scholars among them fell short of their own capacities of greatness owing to the tacit compromise between their high mission and their petty class interest. It could not be otherwise, as their lack of sympathy with the life around them debarred them from looking at its problems in new perspectives and thus prevented an extension of the field of knowledge as well as a fruitful use of the area occupied. But they strove to disguise the paralysing

influence of their narrow outlook by drawing an irrational distinction between the knowledge that was worth the trouble of attainment and the knowledge that was not, and by cutting out as inessential the wayward truths that might have otherwise claimed their attention in a shifting world. So they were hedged in by barriers of their own creation within the narrow bounds of an ancient culture which stood in obvious need of renewal by the absorption of new elements.

It is an error to fasten the responsibility for this intellectual stagnation on the spirit and scope of the learning to which the indigenous schools were dedicated. That learning had always tolerated the boldest speculations on subjects which have elsewhere excited the strongest feelings and given rise to the bitterest conflicts. And in its best days it had included within its sphere a wide variety of subjects having a real or fancied relation to the manifold needs and interests of the community. But the feeling that it ought to be esoteric sanctioned as it was by illiberal regulations born of social unrest and racial antagonism, came in course of time to exercise a sinister influence on its capacity for improvement and expansion. And the malignity of that influence increased when after the transfer of administrative functions to other hands the intelligentsia lost their interest in practical concerns and concentrated their attention on subjects which served to disguise from them and from others the extent of their failure in

a worldly sense. The hopes and endeavours of ordinary men receded thenceforth from their sphere of interest, which came to be occupied more and more by the subtleties of Metaphysics, Law and Philology. But as they loosened their grip on the pre-occupations of their age, they lost also the alert and critical temper and so turned in a spirit of dogmatic assurance to the speculations of the past. Their strength and ambition lay thenceforward in the explanation and defence of ancient texts for which finality was very conveniently assumed. The pyramid of knowledge seemed to be complete and elaborate in every detail, and while they contemplated with satisfaction its soaring summit, they forgot that its apparently solid base required frequent renewal and improvement to protect it from the ravages caused by the flux of experience.

There is therefore not much to be said in favour of the view that the causes which arrested progress in our country were similar to those that led to intellectual sterility in Europe in the Middle Ages. There the strife between the new knowledge and the authority of the Church was too unsparing to permit either to respect the other's special domain. In India, however, no doctrine, however heterodox, ran the risk of being stifled if it came from the learned and did not question the social ascendancy of the privileged order. And the Hindu cosmogony was seldom so literally taken as to hinder the appreciation of scientific truths that appeared acceptable.

on other grounds. It was the temperament and outlook of the scholars more than the nature and limits of their studies that blocked the way to progress by virtually depriving them of the capacity of profiting by experience. All that might have come to them in the flux of life and circumstances was ruled out as either irrelevant or unworthy of their attention. They looked coldly on the claims of science, art and industry because the utmost pretensions of these did not extend beyond the power of improving the environment of man and increasing his material resources. At the same time they evinced a fatal ease in multiplying mere commentaries and digests of texts that bore an ancient and honourable hall mark. Their attitude debarred them in short not only from annexing new intellectual territories but also from raising fresh crops on the old soil for it was only by independent studies of life in its various aspects that new and appropriate meanings could be given to old terms and fresh implications detected in the thoughts that were true for all ages.

They looked at ordinary life through the medium of usage, custom and ceremonial and missed its significance in their attempt to translate it into a routine of experience and activity within certain inelastic forms. The historical and comparative method of study was unknown and their method of approach was very different as it started with the assumption that the conventions and rules which had

formed the framework of life in the past must remain inviolate in every detail inspite of its changing needs and possibilities. A critical study of it as mirrored in their own literature might have corrected this defect in their vision and humanised their outlook. But to literature they paid scant attention, and their imperfect knowledge of it was only a sort of illuminated fringe of the sombre learning of which they were unduly proud.

But their shortcomings, serious as they were, would not warrant the view that the education which they received was entirely futile. Their sphere of enquiry and thought was, indeed, narrow, but the subjects included in it were learnt intensively, while the dialectic method of imparting instruction furnished a searching mental discipline and thus prevented atrophy of the speculative intellect in spite of the limitation of interests and the distaste for new information. Besides, though they could not harmonise spiritual ends with the activities and expectations that form the texture of our daily existence, yet the view that they generally took of human life lent a charm to poverty and an ethical value to failure in a worldly sense. So the spirit in which they lived did not amount to a feeble-hearted confession of intellectual and spiritual bankruptcy in a world that tormented them with futile yearnings. It reflected rather the austere beauty of an asceticism that turned away from the restlessness of ordinary endeavours and achievements to the quiet and peace

of a life of meditation and study. And though their devotion to class interest injured them as much as it did the rest of the community, yet the moral loss involved in such a narrow outlook was not as great as it would have been if it were not an article of faith with them that their aristocratic aloofness was a good thing for the lower orders as well as for themselves. This belief rooted as it was in their creed and their philosophical systems, disguised from them the nakedness of self interest and gave it on the other hand the inviolable character of a religious obligation. They acted Hinduism as they understood it, and while their interpretation of its tenets precluded co operation with inferior classes for civic ideals and other worthy objects, it imposed on them a standard of self discipline and self-abnegation that was never applied to others.

Their outlook on life is today what it was at the beginning of the nineteenth century and for long years before that period. Yet a detailed examination of it has been attempted here because it furnishes some explanation of what is enigmatic in the spontaneous movement of the Bengali mind towards an alien culture. There can be no doubt that for ages past a sense of weakness had been fostered in the worldly-minded by the mutuality of the traditional learning and the spirit of conservatism with which it had come to be associated. This feeling of dissatisfaction, vague and obscure as it was till the advent of the English,

acquired definite shape and compelling force as soon as their example and precept appeared to show the way to social regeneration and material progress. And the ancient culture was just then peculiarly unfit to combat the aggressive spirit of those who were taught by the new gospel to be credulous of quick improvement and confident of success in untried lines of activity. It must have declined under Musalman domination when a rival culture all but engrossed the patronage of the State. But the injury resulting from official neglect was slight as compared with the ruin in which both of them were involved in the hundred years and more of misrule and anarchy which followed the disruption of the Mogul empire. For the constant flow of private liberality, which had supported teachers and pupils, failed like an unreplenished stream when both high and low had more vital interests to safeguard against the insatiable avarice of petty tyrants and plundering armies. The inevitable consequence of such a state of things was that the schools suffered in influence and attraction and the higher branches of study were dropt one after another. The bloom of the culture which had faded even before the establishment of Muslim rule was thus shorn still further of its lustre, and so it had not much to show in defence of itself when the champions of a foreign civilisation challenged its claim to the continued loyalty of the people. Nevertheless, it

of a life of meditation and study. And though their devotion to class interest injured them as much as it did the rest of the community, yet the moral loss involved in such a narrow outlook was not as great as it would have been if it were not an article of faith with them that their aristocratic aloofness was a good thing for the lower orders as well as for themselves. This belief, rooted as it was in their creed and their philosophical systems, disguised from them the nakedness of self interest and gave it on the other hand the inviolable character of a religious obligation. They acted Hinduism as they understood it, and while their interpretation of its tenets precluded co-operation with inferior classes for civic ideals and other worthy objects, it imposed on them a standard of self-discipline and self-abnegation that was never applied to others.

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thinking that in the period under review the Muhammadans who devoted themselves to the acquisition of Persian were outnumbered by Hindu students belonging to the literate castes

It was naturally among members of these classes that the need was first realised of adjustment to the altered conditions by the acquisition of some knowledge of the English tongue. There was again no illusion in the matter. The conception of abstract rightness in training was candidly recognised to be quite as inapplicable to the new learning as it had been to the earlier one, the preference for it being due to the conviction that it would supply in future the key to coveted offices and facilitate communication with the new rulers. And any misgiving that might have existed elsewhere about the wisdom of such a course was easily overcome in Calcutta and its suburbs where the nature and implications of the political change could not be screened from view by the temporary maintenance of a semblance of the old order.

This new education was imparted by men who had less of learning than of worldly wisdom in them. And the schools which they set up differed as much in their scope and character as in their curriculum from the institutions which preserved, however imperfectly, the ancient culture of the land. For their scope was intensely practical and the object with which they were started was pecuniary gain. They professed to give a working knowledge of English,

must be said to the credit of the self abnegating spirit in which it was sought that even under the most discouraging circumstances the number of schools and scholars was not quite inconsiderable and that the most famous centres of learning still retained some of their former glory *

By the side of this orthodox training there was another which consisted in imparting a knowledge of Persian and sometimes of Arabic Under Muhammadan rule it had furnished the passport to distinction and employment under Government and so had been eagerly sought by the worldly-minded among the Brahmins as well as by men of other literate castes But even then it had been frankly recognised as secular and utilitarian, as befitting this or that station in life and not as absolutely right in itself So it had only a fortuitous importance which was bound to decline with the assumption of authority by the English But there are reasons for

* See W. Adams's *First Report on the State of Education in Bengal 1835* He thought that the total number of teachers and students of Hindu learning was over 12 000 and his estimate may be taken as fairly indicative of the diffusion of this learning in the earlier period

Among the important centres of this culture were Nadia, Tribeni and Bansberia Ward stated in 1818 that at Bansberia there were 12 or 14 colleges in all of which Logic was taught and that there were 7 or 8 in the town of Tribeni H. H. Wilson estimated that in 1821 there were 25 such institutions in Nadia

learning from intercourse with them and from a knowledge of their arts and literature the secret of their unfettered enterprise and unparalleled success. The combined operation of these motives provided an opportunity to those who were ready to sell their modest learning for a modest income, and the school-master's trade became thenceforth a recognised profession in Calcutta and its suburbs. Many of these institutions had only a mushroom existence; but others were more solidly built and did a certain amount of useful work, though in none of them was the standard of instruction sufficiently high.*

Their efforts came to be seconded shortly after by the educational work of the Christian missionaries whose proselytizing zeal took this practical turn on a small scale some time before Alexander Duff definitely adopted English education as the most effective method of instilling the principles and precepts of Christianity in the minds of the Bengalis. Government, however, was not yet prepared to endorse their view that the western system of education was required for the improvement of the people. Warren Hastings had been of opinion that the English would justify and ensure their exalted posi-

Ray, Joy Narayan Ghosal, Krishna Mohun Mazumdar, Kalmath Ray and Dwarkanath Tagore

* Among these were the schools founded and owned by Aratoon Peters Sherbourne, Krishnamohan Bose, Bhubanmohan Dutt and Shiva Dutt. Sherbourne's institution attracted boys from some of the best known families in Calcutta.

and to this end all other interests of the learners were subordinated. Hence not only their spiritual nature but also their intellect remained unawakened by the education that they received. But defective as it was this instruction was eagerly sought and the demand for it steadily increased thus furnishing fresh opportunities for adventurous Eurasians who accepted the role of teachers of the rising generation of Bengalis.

There are reasons for thinking that other motives than the desire of making a living were at work soon in swelling the call for English education. The language employed in the Courts of Law and the offices of Government was still largely Persian, and the rulers were not yet disposed to appoint Indians to responsible posts in which a knowledge of English was absolutely necessary. Nor was the demand in mercantile establishments so large and elastic as to absorb a steadily increasing number of young men with the proper educational equipment. Moreover this equipment was often sought by members of families in affluent circumstances and highly prized by some of the leaders of Hindu society as a powerful lever for collective as well as individual uplift*. So it was not merely the selfish desire of getting on in the world that furnished the stimulus alongside of it there was the more laudable ambition of getting into the society of the rulers and

* The following deserve honourable mention in this connection—Raja Tej Chandra of Burdwan Raja Ram Mohan

matic movement in favour of European education , but his efforts had proved fruitless as the time was not then ripe for a revision of the policy adopted by Warren Hastings Lord Cornwallis, who had been approached, had manifested an utter indifference to all schemes for the conversion or enlightenment of the Indians, which, in his opinion, were destined to failure and likely at the same time to divert the attention of the rulers from England's plain duty to the country, which was to "compile a code of laws and to create a landed aristocracy by fixing the revenue in perpetuity "

Disappointed but not discouraged by the rebuff,

duction of light. The Hindus err, because they are ignorant, and their errors have never been fairly laid before them. The communication of our light and knowledge to them would prove the best remedy for their disorders, and this remedy is proposed, from a full conviction that if judiciously and patiently applied, it would have great and happy effects upon them, effects honourable and advantageous for us. We proceed then to observe, that it is perfectly in the power of this country, by degrees to impart to the Hindus our language; afterwards through that medium, to make them acquainted with our easy literary compositions upon a variety of subjects, and, let not the idea excite derision, progressively with the simple elements of our art, our philosophy and religion. These acquisitions would silently undermine and at length subvert, the fabric of error. The first communication and the instrument of introducing the 'es' must be the English language, this is a key which will open to them a world of new ideas and policy alone might have impelled us long since, to put it into their hands.'

tion in the land by maintaining order and tranquility with a strong hand and by allowing the inhabitants to develop their own culture and faith without interference or guidance from outside. And his policy dominated for some time after he had ceased to be at the helm of affairs. The eagerness of the missionaries to introduce the light of the West was viewed, therefore, with distrust.

A noteworthy though unsuccessful attempt had been made by Charles Grant in 1786 to challenge the conception of police state which had found favour with the authorities. He had been in Bengal for some time, and his experience of the state of things had led him to the conclusion that English education and the evangelical labours of Christian missionaries could alone enable the inhabitants to shake off the torpor of ages and resume the forward march once more. It had not occurred to him that their ancient faith and culture might prove a beneficent influence if the overlying cobwebs of error and superstition were brushed away by an intelligent but not irreverent sifting of them. On the contrary, their evil customs and institutions had appeared but derivative currents of evil which must continue to pervert and enervate unless life and health were sought in a new fountain of truth and goodness*. He had advocated therefore, a syste-

* See C. Grant's *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain* written chiefly in 1792. The true cure, he wrote, of darkness is the intro-

from introducing a corresponding provision in the charter

But as already observed, western education of a kind flourished even in the cold shadow of official neglect. Its aim was to enable the students to write a good hand and to acquire the sort of familiarity with the English language which was in request in commercial establishments and the offices of Government. So it was not liberal education but might appropriately rank as vocational training. Yet those who received it carried their heads high and rated it above any other education that the country had to offer, its goodness being determined with reference to the conspicuousness of the results that were obtained by virtue of it. There was nothing, however, in this training and very little in the nature of the work for which it was a preparation that might awaken the nobler instincts and impulses or correct the false peculiar colouring that is given to the varied interests of man by singular and undeserved good fortune. Hence those who received it carried to unwarrantable lengths the separation of functions by relegating to the priests more than ever before the duties that they owed to their spiritual nature and to society. And priestcraft was not slow in exploiting their indifference to the highest concerns, consequent as it was on an improvement in their income and a disposition to spend it recklessly. Religious ceremonies and works of charity became more costly and elaborate as the spirit which sancti-

Grant appealed on his return to England to Wilberforce, who proved a stalwart champion of the scheme. Thus supported, it met with a favourable reception in Parliament in 1793 when the question of renewing the charter of the East India Company was being discussed. And a resolution was adopted to the effect that it is the peculiar and bounden duty of the British Legislature to promote by all just and prudent means the interest and happiness of the inhabitants of the British dominions in India, and that for these ends such measures ought to be adopted as may gradually tend to their advancement in useful knowledge and to their religious and moral improvement. The determined opposition, however of the India House prevented the ministers

Grant was probably constitutionally unfit for the appreciation of what was good in the Hindu character and his estimate of it was based on his familiarity with that section of the people with whom he had business relations and whose corrupt manners were due as much to the defiling influence of the dirty transactions in which they were engaged as to anything else. Upon the whole wrote he we cannot avoid recognising in the people of Hindoostan a race of men lamentably degenerate and base retaining but a feeble sense of moral obligation yet obstinate in their disregard of what they know to be right governed by malevolent and licentious passions strongly exemplifying the effects produced on society by great and general corruption of manners and sunk in misery by their vices in a country peculiarly calculated by its natural advantages to promote the happiness of its inhabitants. It is a curious piece of psychological analysis and deserves to be contrasted with the opinion of Warren Hastings who had far better opportunities of forming it and whose estimate is given on a subsequent page.

establishments of European merchants, whose commercial morality was thoroughly vitiated by an extravagant spirit of speculation. So there was very little in the nature of the occupations which the literate castes chose to take up that might correct the extreme one-sidedness of their education. On the other hand, its very imperfections were responsible for the fatal facility with which they were pressed and stiffened into the exact mould of their ignoble official character. The mischief may appear to have been confined to a microscopic minority. But it created an unworthy tradition concerning the scope and object of education and gave currency to a new view of worldly success which was not without far-reaching influence on the morale of the higher classes. And in so far as it did these things, it inflicted an abiding injury on the most august interest of man, *viz* on the purity and vigour of his nature.

Government was not, indeed, altogether indifferent at the time to the educational interests of the people. In a memorable minute of 1811, Lord Minto deplored the progressive decline of literature and science among the Indians and expressed the hope that the decay might be arrested if only the rulers would take immediate steps for their revival.

* It is a common remark that science and literature are in a progressive state of decay among the natives of India. From every enquiry which I have been enabled to make on this interesting subject, that remark appears to me but too well founded. The number of the learned is not only

fied them declined, and new and forbidden pleasures were indulged in under the comfortable impression that they could be atoned for by liberal gifts to the ministers of religion.

The evil was not new. It had eaten into the vitals of Hindu society from a period beyond historic memory and had grown in bulk when under the Musalman sovereigns, members of the highest castes had in their anxiety to reap the honours and advantages of life discarded the study of their literature and faith for that of Persian. But never before had it attained the dimensions which it did in the early days of British rule. For in the earlier period those who rose to distinction and affluence by virtue of their knowledge of the customs and laws of the rulers occupied generally positions of great trust, and the steady hand of responsibility checked their vagaries. In the closing years however of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth educated Indians were employed in very subordinate offices, and if they amassed fortunes and made themselves formidable, it was as often as not by the arts of the sycophant and the informer*. Nor were conditions much better in the

* Nothing could be more demoralising than the anomalous position of the *amlas* in this period. They were miserably paid and were denied all sorts of authority. But the ignorance of their European superiors gave them often a determining voice in the conduct of public business. So they were dreaded by the people at large and when the occasion required it liberally bribed.

The Act of 1813 contained the first legislative admission of the claim of education to a share of the income of the State. The acknowledgment was remarkable as it came from men who had not shown much enthusiasm for public instruction at home. But probably some measure of interest in the educational needs of the great dependency had been awakened in England by the persistent efforts of the missionaries and their supporters when Lord Minto's despatch brought the question once more to the notice of the ministers. And so when they were called upon to consider the terms on which the charter of the East India Company might be renewed, they decided to have the opinion of men who had a first-hand knowledge of the state of things in India. That opinion, however, was not in favour of any interference on the part of the State with the educational arrangements that existed in the country. Administrators of considerable and approved experience like Warren Hastings, Sir John Malcolm and Thomas Munro gave it as their settled conviction that if internal peace and protection from inroads could be guaranteed, the best results would be obtained by leaving the people of Hindustan to develop their culture in their own way.* But the

* See *Minutes of Evidence before Committees of both Houses of Parliament, March and April, 1813*. Warren Hastings's observations on the character and culture of the Hindus is given here as no one was better qualified to speak on the subject than he. "The Hindoos," said he, "are gentle,

His views attracted the attention of Parliament and the India Act of 1813 laid down that whenever funds permitted, a lakh of rupees should be set apart annually for the education of the people. A few months after, the Directors of the East India Company required the Indian Government to spend this sum every year for the encouragement of indigenous learning and the promotion of scientific knowledge. They repudiated, however, the idea of founding colleges similar to those of the West, under the impression that any attempt on their part to depart from the traditional system of education might be resented by the people.

diminished but the circle of learning even among those who still devote themselves to it appears to be considerably contracted. The abstract sciences are abandoned, polite literature neglected and no branch of learning cultivated but what is connected with the peculiar religious doctrines of the people. The immediate consequence of this state of things is the disuse and even actual loss of many valuable books and it is to be apprehended that unless Government interpose with a fostering hand the revival of letters may shortly be hopeless from a want of books or of persons capable of explaining them. The principal cause of the present neglected state of literature in India is to be traced to the want of that encouragement which was formerly afforded to it by princes, chieftains and opulent individuals under the native governments. Such encouragement must always operate as a strong incentive to study and literary exertions especially in India where the learned professors have little if any other support — Minute dated 6th March 1811 of the Governor General in Council

that out of any surplus which might remain of the rents, revenues and profits a sum of not less than one lakh of rupees (£10,000) in each year should be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories of India." It was a definite pronouncement on the financial responsibility of the East India Company with regard to the education of its subjects. And the special attention of the Governor-General was consequently drawn to this section in a despatch from the Court of Directors of the 6th of September, 1813.

It is not easy to disentangle and bring into prominence the various motives that led to the reversal of the policy of Warren Hastings and Lord Cornwallis. Nor is such an analysis of much interest at this late hour. But what is significant is that though the original impulse came from religious fervour, yet no trace of it remained in the measure that was the ultimate outcome of it. To revive and improve the ancient learning of the land and to supplement it by 'useful knowledge,' these were the objects that were clearly indicated in the educational clause of the Act. It would seem that the risks of propagandism were painfully present to the minds of the legislators. Moreover, special stress was laid on them by Charles Marsh, who uttered a discordant note amid the chorus of ap-

trend of public opinion was in the opposite direction Parliament was flooded with representations advocating the assumption of a definite responsibility by the Company with regard to the mental and moral well being of the people under their sway And the fervour and conviction with which Wilberforce spoke on the occasion secured an easy victory for his cause So the new charter provided that it should be lawful for the Governor General in Council to direct

benevolent more susceptible of gratitude for kindness shown them than prompted to vengeance for wrongs inflicted and as exempt from the worst propensities of human passion as any people upon the face of the earth they are faithful and affectionate in service and submissive to legal authority they are superstitious it is true but they do not think ill of us for not thinking as they do Gross as the modes of their worship are the precepts of their religion are wonderfully fitted to promote the best ends of society its peace and good order and even from their theology arguments may be drawn to illustrate and support the most refined mysteries of our own

Hastings had indeed very good reasons for praising the eclectic spirit of Hindu culture The Brahmins who compiled a code of Hindu law by command of Hastings prefixed their performance by affirming the equal merit of every form of religious worship Contraries of belief and diversities of religion they said were in fact part of the scheme of Providence for as a painter gave beauty to a picture by a variety of colours or as a gardener embellished his garden with flowers of every hue so God appointed to every tribe its own religion that man might glorify Him in diverse modes all having the same end and being equally acceptable in His sight —H H Wilson *Essays and Lectures on the Religion of the Hindus*

wrote, "that there are in the Sanskrit language many excellent systems of Ethics, with codes of laws and compendiums of the duties relating to every class of the people, the study of which might be useful to those natives who may be destined for the Judicial Department of Government. There are also many tracts of merit, we are told, on the virtues of plants and drugs and on the application of them in medicine, the knowledge of which might prove desirable to the European practitioner, and there are treatises on Astronomy and Mathematics, including Geometry and Algebra, which, though they may not add new light to European science, might be made to form links of communication between the natives and the gentlemen in our service who are attached to the Observatory and to the Department of Engineers, and by such intercourse the natives might be led to adopt the modern improvements in those and other sciences "

They certainly overrated the possibilities of the filtration of western knowledge when they expressed the hope that contact with well-informed Englishmen would induce Indians to adopt the latest improvements in science. They exaggerated also the risks that there might have been in imparting a purely secular learning to the higher and middle classes in Bengal. And their fear combined with their expectation to prevent them from drawing up a scheme which should offer the ancient lore and the new knowledge in a justly balanced

probation with which Wilberforce's proposal was greeted. It is one thing said he to dispel the charm that binds mankind to established habits and ancient obligations and another to turn them over to the discipline of new institutions and the authority of new doctrines. In that dreadful interval—that dreary void where the mind is left to wander and grope its way without the props that have hitherto supported or the lights that have guided it—what are the chances that they will discern the beauties or submit to the restraints of the religion you propose to give them?

But besides the likelihood of moral disarray to which he referred there was also the hazard of complete and dismal failure in an avowed attempt to impose a new faith on the people of India. So philanthropists and statesmen might have preferred Lord Minto's scheme as a remedy for the moral and intellectual atrophy to which he called attention. In any case the Act of 1813 left aside the question of religious training and prescribed the offer of ancient learning and modern science in if possible a happily blended union. And a similar anxiety to avoid whatever might cause a jar or jolt in the minds of the subjects coupled with a striking appreciation of the indigenous culture found expression in the first educational despatch of the Directors of the East India Company which was addressed to the Governor General in Council on the 3rd of June 1814. We are informed they

of Bengal, associated as it is with the first systematic attempt to introduce the impressionable Bengali mind to the thought and culture of Europe. Similar attempts were also made by the Christian missionaries of Serampore and Chinsura. But their achievements pale into insignificance when compared with the results obtained by the Hindu College and the enthusiasm for the new light which it evoked. It had its troubles at the outset. The money which had been liberally subscribed for its maintenance was almost wholly lost owing to the collapse of the European concern in which it had been invested. And orthodox Hinduism had its doubts at first about the propriety of a secular education that professed to be more than an equipment for the daily routine of official duties. These doubts, however, soon disappeared, and the solvency of the institution was assured by a timely and liberal grant from Government.

Our rulers were not, indeed, altogether insensible to the claims of those institutions that aimed at familiarising the Indian mind with the amenities of European literature and science. They subsidised the Calcutta School Book Society which was founded in 1817 with the important object of creating suitable juvenile literature and distributing it free or at a nominal price.² They extended a

² The Marchioness of Hastings took an active interest in the well-being of this organisation and herself prepared and sent to press several elementary works. The Marquis of

union. So they advocated a programme in which the mode of instruction was entirely oriental while its scope and content were almost wholly so. We are inclined to think they observed that the mode by which the learned Hindus might be disposed to concur with us in prosecuting those objects would be by our leaving them to the practice of an usage long established amongst them of giving instruction at their own houses and by our encouraging them in the exercise and cultivation of their talents by the stimulus of honorary marks of distinction and in some instances by grants of pecuniary assistance. This however was only a passing phase in their policy and their angle of vision changed completely within a few years with the establishment of their political authority on a secure basis. But just at that moment the view that was taken of the mentality of their Indian subjects seemed to justify the spirit of caution and compromise which was the outstanding feature of their first educational programme.

The prospect however of an extension of the indigenous system of training failed to satisfy the advanced party in Calcutta. And so a number of enlightened and public spirited citizens joined hands with David Hare, Sir Edward Hyde East and Harington in working out a scheme of western education to which effect was given by the establishment of the Hindu College on the 20th of January 1817. It is a memorable day in the history

the people in a despatch that advocated the revival of their ancient learning and how Parliament went farther than he proposed in prescribing that a knowledge of the sciences should be grafted on the stock of oriental lore.* The addition was noteworthy, for the educational interests of the people demanded more than a resuscitation of their ancient faith and culture. These had undoubtedly great merits, but the civilisation of which they were the exponents had in its long and relentless struggle with rivals covered and protected itself with a number of illiberal customs and institutions which disguised its real character and checked its progress. And vigour, nobility and scope could come back to it only if it was relieved of the crushing weight

* Little doubt can be entertained that the prevalence of the crimes of perjury and forgery so frequently noticed in the official reports is in a great measure ascribable both in the Muhammedans and Hindus to the want of due instruction in the moral and religious tenets of their respective faiths. It has been even suggested and apparently not without foundation that to this uncultivated state of the minds of the natives is in a great degree to be ascribed the prevalence of those crimes which were recently so great a scourge to the country. The latter offences against the peace and happiness of society have indeed for the present been materially checked by the vigilance and energy of the police, but it is probably only by the more general diffusion of knowledge among the great body of the people that the seeds of these evils can be effectually destroyed.—*Minute of the Governor General in Council dated 6th March, 1811*

helping hand to flourishing missionary institutions. And when the Hindu College fell on evil days, they provided handsomely for its maintenance and deputed Horace Hayman Wilson to put it once more into good working order. But in all these measures they had in view only the merits and achievements of particular institutions. Their patronage was not the outcome of a clear recognition of the utility of western knowledge as a new and stimulating discipline for the Indian intellect and much less of the part which it might play in combination with eastern learning as a remedial agent for the disorders of the day.

The failure of Government to correlate the two kinds of culture was due not to their inherent incompatibility but to circumstances that were extraneous. To these circumstances therefore we must advert to combat the popular but pernicious notion that a synthesis was attempted and that it proved conclusively their irreconcilable antagonism. We have seen how pointed reference was made by Lord Minto to the intellectual and moral decay of

Hastings gave a donation of Rs 1000/ and a subscription of Rs 500/ and patronised it in other ways. The Calcutta School Society was formed with some of its members on 1st September 1818 with the object of assisting and improving existing institutions and preparing select pupils of distinguished talents by superior instruction. See *Good Old Days of Hon ble John Company* compiled by W H Carey

injustice to its cultural value in the exclusive stress that they laid soon after on useful knowledge. They never took the trouble, however, to define what they meant by useful knowledge, though certain observations in their first educational despatch as well as in subsequent communications would seem to indicate that they understood it in the sense of knowledge that might benefit the administration by fostering a wholesome respect for the sovereign power and by equipping its recipients for service in subordinate capacities. To such knowledge, again, the advanced party in Bengal looked up for deliverance from irksome restraints as well as for new resources of activity and aspiration. And thus the combined pressure of public opinion and official direction made it difficult to elaborate an educational scheme with some regard for completeness and uniformity of design on the lines which had been none too clearly laid down by Parliament.

The first measure of the committee was to complete the organisation of the Sanskrit College which had been lately founded in Calcutta.* Its

* In 1811 Government had promised to establish colleges for the advancement of Hindu literature in Nadia and Tirhut. The scheme failed and Government decided to redeem its promise by the opening of a Hindu Sanskrit College at Calcutta after the model of that at Benares. The foundation stone was laid in 1821, an annual sum of Rs. 30,000 was granted and Rs. 120,000 was afterwards sanctioned for the erection of the

This was attempted almost immediately after his departure when some of the most experienced officers in Calcutta were constituted into a board under the title of the General Committee of Public Instruction.* As many of them were leading members of the Asiatic Society, the committee showed a distinct bias towards oriental learning at the outset. But just then an opinion adverse to it had gained ground among the Directors of the East India Company, and they did

perpetuate ignorance in order to ensure paltry and dishonest advantages over the blindness of the people

* On 17th July 1823 the Governor General resolved that there shall be constituted a General Committee of Public Instruction for the purpose of ascertaining the state of public education in this part of India and of the Public Institutions designed for its promotion and of considering and from time to time submitting to Government the suggestion of such measures as it may appear expedient to adopt with a view to the better instruction of the people to the introduction among them of useful knowledge and to the improvement of their moral character. The members were appointed by a letter from Government dated 31st July 1823. They were Harington Larkins Martin Bayley Shakespear Mackenzie Prinsep Sutherland Stirling and Wilson. Their duties came in course of time to include the superintendence of the various native colleges and seminaries established supported or assisted by the Government of Bengal the direction of the course of study pursued at each the consideration of periodical reports of the examinations held at them the audit of their monthly bills the payment of their special appropriations and the entertainment of proposals for composing translating editing and preparing or printing works likely to be serviceable to them.

establishment had called forth a remarkable pronouncement from Raja Ram Mohun Ray on the inexpediency of teaching young men "what was known two thousand years ago with the addition of vain and empty subtleties since then produced by speculative men" And the subsequent labours of the committee in working out the details of instruction and superintendence provoked an even more emphatic arraignment of the scope and character of the new institution by the Court of Directors, who observed that by starting seminaries for the study of oriental literature, Government was binding itself "to teach a great deal of what was frivolous, not a little of what was purely mischievous and a small remainder indeed in which utility was in any way concerned"*. In their rejoinder, the committee dwelt on the merits of its philosophy and poetry and on the value of the extensive stores of historical material and legal knowledge that it contained They deprecated also abrupt

building—*Memoir of Thomas Fisher, Searcher of the Records, originally compiled in 1827*

* See Despatch of the Court of Directors to Governor-General in Council dated 18th February, 1824 The authorship of this precious document is ascribed to James Mill, and its spirit is quite in keeping with his estimate of the Hindu culture and social organisation as given in his History The narrow range of his interests and investigations had completely incapacitated him for the task of properly appreciating Hindu civilisation and he had his information, moreover from men on whose testimony little reliance should have been placed

sense of the British administrators answered very well. But on the broader and more important question of combining the two cultures, they do not seem to have made much headway^{*} They recognised the need. But they overstressed the desirability of advancing step by step. And the beginning which they made was not likely to inspire a genuine respect for the new lore. Spelling books and elementary English readers together with a handbook of universal History and an equally elementary manual of Geography were prescribed for the edification of men, who, as the committee admitted, "directed and

* The course of instruction pursued at the Sanskrit College is divided into two branches. The first is intended to give a command of the language—the second, of such branches of Hindu science as may be an object to the student, especially law. To the medical class is attached a lecturer on anatomy and medicine, as taught in Europe, and there are also an English teacher and assistant for the instruction in English. The pupils are expected to have read a little of Sanskrit Grammar when admitted. Six years are allowed for a progress through grammar, Sahitya and Alankara classes, during one year of which at least attendance in the Arithmetic class is imperative. Attendance on the English class also is expected to commence soon after admission. A further period of six years is allowed for the youths to complete their studies, during which they may attend what classes they please. The English classes are elementary, and use the spelling books and the readers, with the introduction to universal history and Goldsmith's Geography—*Report on the Colleges and Schools for Native Education under the Superintendence of the General Committee of Public Instruction in Bengal, 1831*

scheme of education might not lead to orderly progress. There can be no doubt that it required to be supplemented and even corrected by the learning of Europe which was rich and full exactly where the other was weak and narrow. This however, could not be effected by giving the Pandits and Maulvis a smattering of English and a few disconnected facts and theories of physical science. The highest elements in the two cultures had to be combined in order to elevate and enlarge the life of the individual and the corporate life of the community. But such a fruitful synthesis by comprehension was not attempted though the committee seem to have realised its importance.

They made certain improvements in the system of Sanskrit education. The defects of a too early specialisation were avoided. And proficiency was placed within the reach of the average student as the fruit of a reasonable period of honest toil. The course of instruction as planned by them covered a dozen years the first six of which were reserved for imparting an intensive knowledge of the Sanskrit language while the rest were devoted to the cultivation of any particular branch of learning for which the student might develop an aptitude. This was facilitated by the mastery over the language which he had previously acquired and which often enabled him to avoid the narrowness incidental to over specialisation by taking up more than one subject of study. Thus in matters of detail the practical

to teach it to claim new provinces of thought without surrendering what it already possessed, this was the task before the educationist. But it was not attempted with even a tentative assurance at the period of which we are speaking.

The absence of a clear creative idea did not, however, affect the success of the Hindu College. It was probably due in some measure to the energy which Wilson brought to the task of placing the institution on a satisfactory basis. Under his superintendence, it rapidly developed from a small school with a modest curriculum into an important seminary for imparting the highest instruction in a wide variety of subjects.* And its popularity grew with its

*The books originally taught in the highest class were Tegg's Book of Knowledge, Enfield's Speaker, Goldsmith's Geography, Murray's Grammar and elementary treatises on Arithmetic and Algebra. But in 1831, the committee was able to report that the College had been divided into a junior and a senior school, "that the students began in the junior school with the rudiments of English and rose to the 7th class by which time they had acquired a tolerable command of the English language, had mastered its grammar, had advanced in Arithmetic to vulgar fractions and had some acquaintance with the elements of Geography, that on promotion to the upper school they proceeded with the same studies, with the addition of History and Poetry, and in succession, of Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Algebra and Mathematics." And even this was only the beginning of the improvement, for soon after the course was made much more comprehensive and the standard of proficiency became very high.

influenced the intellect of Hindustan by their character and profession. The juvenile literature to which they were thus introduced might have taught them to speak and write English indifferently. But it could not have overcome their indifference to alien learning and opened their minds to greater and broader purposes than they had recognised in the past.

The error was repeated at the Madrasah and with very much the same result. Instead of imparting all that was great in western speculation and research to a select body of oriental scholars and then working through them, the committee prescribed a few elementary books in English which advanced students in Arabic and Persian were to learn with Muhammadan boys in general. An introduction to a foreign language is no doubt often helpful to scholars who are looking out for fresh sources of information. But the task was different in India where as the committee knew well enough

European science and literature were not held to be worth the trouble of attainment. A rousing appeal to the intellect was what the situation demanded. But such an appeal could not have come from a little of Euclid and a few pages of spelling books and historical and geographical manuals. Islam had its own culture, its systems of political, moral and natural philosophy which however had become more or less stereotyped. To take the Muslim mind for a wider vision out of the grooves cut by them

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The absence of a clear creative idea did not, however, affect the success of the Hindu College. It was probably due in some measure to the energy which Wilson brought to the task of placing the institution on a satisfactory basis. Under his superintendence, it rapidly developed from a small school with a modest curriculum into an important seminary for imparting the highest instruction in a wide variety of subjects*. And its popularity grew with its

* The books originally taught in the highest class were Tegg's Book of Knowledge, Enfield's Speaker, Goldsmith's Geography, Murray's Grammar and elementary treatises on Arithmetic and Algebra. But in 1831, the committee was able to report that the College had been divided into a junior and a senior school, "that the students began in the junior school with the rudiments of English and rose to the 7th class by which time they had acquired a tolerable command of the English language, had mastered its grammar, had advanced in Arithmetic to vulgar fractions and had some acquaintance with the elements of Geography, that on promotion to the upper school they proceeded with the same studies, with the addition of History and Poetry, and in succession, of Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Algebra and Mathematics." And even this was only the beginning of the improvement, for soon after the course was made much more comprehensive and the standard of proficiency became very high.

success so that in the course of a few years and inspite of the odious innovation of charging a tuition fee the Hindu College became the fashion with the intelligent and ambitious youths of Calcutta. Their eagerness moreover for the new learning fostered and guided as it was by inspiring lessons from capable teachers facilitated the attainment of a degree of proficiency that extorted the admiration of discerning critics. Even so early as 1831 the Committee of Public Instruction were able to report that the results obtained had surpassed expectation that a command of the English language and a familiarity with its literature and science had been acquired to an extent rarely equalled by any class of students in Europe. This exotic showed also a tendency to diffusion from the outset for we have it from the same authority that independent schools conducted by young men reared in the Hindu College sprang up in every direction. But while congratulating themselves on this achievement the committee forgot that this very diffusiveness might perpetuate and even augment the evils that were inseparable from one sided culture. They had taken occasion a few years ago to remark that the same individuals must be taught the age old indigenous learning and the new knowledge from the West in order that they might be as competent to refute error as to impart truth. But they ignored their own principle when they let Sanskrit drop out of the curriculum of the Hindu College without being required to do so by

the scope and purpose of the institution as defined by its founders. This ancient literature could have furnished the key to much that appeared fantastic or inexplicable in the beliefs and observances of the Hindus. In it were to be sought the genesis and rationale of the social and domestic obligations that formed the texture of their daily lives. It alone might have indicated the direction and degree of deflection from ancient ideals and aspirations to which there was a reference at every turn by rival schools of reformers. And lastly its own limitations as a guide in the modern world could have been discovered only by a critical examination of its message and compass. Yet it was omitted from the course simply because the advocates of modern culture had in a fit of petulance declared that they would have none of it!

The records of the Hindu College are on every account the most interesting things in the history of western education in Bengal, its failures and its successes being equally instructive. After the first few years of doubt and distrust were over, it found the minds of its alumni flexible to all its purposes. It took the plastic material, moulded it in its own way and made it in many instances impervious to extraneous influence. It gave both law and impulse to its students, and their distinctive ways of thinking and feeling in afterlife were a sort of trade-mark of the manufactory through which they had passed. In fact, there was a close resemblance between it

and the schools of the Pandits in this respect though nothing could be more dissimilar to their ancient learning than the scope and drift of the lessons which it imparted. No other English school was ever a controlling force in this sense or at any rate to the same extent as the Hindu College. Historically the Hindu School and Presidency College are its successors. But though their records are bright with the names of illustrious men their influence was never as profound and abiding as that of the parent institution. And when account is taken of the nature of the work which it undertook and of the thoroughness which it aimed at and achieved there can be no hesitation in saying that it had no worthy heir to its traditions.

The unique success of the Hindu College spelt of course failure in a wider sense in so far as it involved the cramping and pressing down of the mind of the learner to the measure of a strait laced rationalism. Education seldom requires a wholesale and summary rejection of ancient beliefs and principles and it is a gam of doubtful value if among a people with a civilization of their own it enjoins an abrupt break with the past instead of inculcating the conservation of whatever might serve as elements of future progress. The excess of reforming zeal of those who came out of the Hindu College testified therefore to a radical defect in their training. The glamour of the new learning blinded them to the merits of the old and in ex

tending a whole-hearted welcome to the former, they forgot that the latter might have claims on their loyalty and reverence. There were, indeed, some among them who in later life paused to look back and revise their partial notions. But they did not, generally speaking, attain that philosophical reach of mind, that intellectual equanimity and repose which it is the privilege of a liberal education to give. This imperfection, however, revealed the power and possibilities of education better than any amount of success might have done. The uncertain vision of the alumni of the Hindu College led them often into strange errors, but they were among the first to protest against the age-long acquiescence in orthodox ways of thinking and living. And they exhibited no ordinary degree of courage and independence in challenging such stern antagonists as ancient custom and tradition. That courage and that independence are a measure of the stimulus that came to them from their education in the Hindu College, though it must be said that the stimulating system was overdone in their case.

Credit is justly given to David Hare for the foundation of this once famous college. The idea originated with him, and his eagerness to translate it into a reality proved a stimulating and binding power in the circle of those who knew him and who shared for the time being his faith and determination. Hence though he had able coadjutors, yet the moral force behind this new venture was

supplied by his own optimism and perseverance. And when it was threatened with a premature collapse owing to the loss of its endowment and the apathy of its original supporters it was he who saved it by seeking the sustaining hand of Government and inducing the managers to accept the condition on which assistance was offered. Moreover he watched over it with a parent's tenderness and solicitude throughout the experimental stage and that solicitude did not abate even after it had struggled to success and distinction. There is, therefore no injustice to those who toiled and strove with him in regarding him as the founder of the Hindu College. And for our purposes at least it is enough to take into account the motive that prompted him to inaugurate this decided movement in favour of European learning. That motive was to set the people of Bengal on the way to economic and political progress. It was his conviction that they possessed all the elements of greatness and prosperity in their mental equipment and the material resources of their land and that they had failed to make a proper use of these advantages only because centuries of misgovernment and tyranny had extinguished in them the spirit of enterprise and the thirst for useful knowledge. They appeared, therefore to need a potent and rational stimulus and he decided to try the quickening influence of western knowledge especially as it seemed to be closely related to their altered circumstances. His faith

in what he considered to be the proper destiny of the people and in the remedial virtue of European education found mature embodiment and shape in the Hindu College.

Hare's life was rich in sympathy and service and in the inspiration that comes from a lofty end steadily pursued, and so his influence was great. But even his influence could not have ensured the popularity of the institution, unless the time had been particularly opportune for its appearance. It is said that the Hindu College with its uncompromising modernity became the fashion with young and ambitious spirits in spite of the fact that the encouragement of oriental lore was uppermost in the thoughts of Government. The truth is that a subtle change had come over their temper and outlook in consequence of the complete overturning of the old political order. A whole system of complex and apparently well-devised arrangements had been swept away in a flood of ruin, and a new organisation had taken its place with a new set of builders, who were strong in the strength of their many-sided enterprise and in their freedom from conventional restraints. The spectacle had been significant and its lesson had not been lost on the clear-sighted and the alert. So they were anxious thenceforth to break away from the grey monotony of the life to which they had been condemned by the static and inflexible character of their social regulations and impatient to fare forth into a world in which everything would be

conceded to ambition and industry. Hence when the Hindu College came to be established old traditions were losing ground and time worn customs were falling out of credit with them. They saw the world from a new angle and suspected that deliverance from the galling yoke of orthodox modes of living and thinking might even be a spiritual necessity. And the Hindu College became the fashion with them for the simple reason that the logic of events had convinced them of the need of a fresh adaptation and a new outlook.

This change of attitude was the outcome there fore of the circumstances of the day. But there is no serious departure from historical truth in dividing the responsibility for it between them and Raja Ram Mohun Ray. Each age has no doubt its distinctive spirit and peculiar outlook on the world. But the outlook and the spirit become articulate for the first time in men who in character and intelligence are far above the ordinary run of their race. It is thus indeed that they are converted into the potent springs of thought and action that underlie and explain history. And so it was in Bengal in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Raja Ram Mohun Ray absorbed the new ideas and sentiments that were growing up around him and invented fitting expressions for them in word and action. Expressions through which his personality and genius touched a new chord in the heart of the recalcitrant and aroused those who had been till

then out of touch with the movements of the advancing party. He was not of course alone in this work of regeneration, for others too were plainly disgusted with the existing order and expected some improvement from a change. But it was his virility and energy that exalted their hopes and wishes from the immaturity of an adolescent yearning into a constructive social force. Thus he may be truly said to have definitively closed a period of arrested development and opened a fresh one of activity and remarkable though one-sided progress in the sphere of education as well as in other fields.

The direct connection of Raja Ram Mohun Ray with the Hindu College was, indeed, one of the slightest. He enthusiastically welcomed the scheme when it was communicated to him by David Hare. And he would have gladly collaborated with those who had set their hearts on realising it. But he decided to stand aloof when he learnt that orthodox Hinduism had taken fright at the idea of associating him with the enterprise. His spirit, however, dominated over the methods and ideals of the academy, though there were no visible signs of his influence. For the character and success of an educational institution depend in no small measure on the attitude and temperament of its alumni, and that attitude was determined in the case of the Hindu College by the intellectual and moral conceptions of Raja Ram Mohun Ray and not by the views of men like Raja Radhakanta Dev, who thought

that a compromise was possible between Indian tradition and western knowledge by which each would retain its proper province without encroaching on the limits of the other. For a just comprehension, therefore, of the influence of the new light on the morale and sanity of the people, we have to study carefully what Raja Ram Mohun Ray thought of it and of the forces of obstruction and retrogression with which it had to contend.

It is not the place for a review of the work and achievements of Raja Ram Mohun Ray. But his views on education were so closely connected with his avowed aims and experiences in other fields of useful activity that their full significance is realised only in the light of what he discovered when engaged in solving difficult problems and initiating bold experiments that were not educational in the usual sense of the word. When he left his alienated home and came to Calcutta in 1814, he came with the settled conviction that a supreme effort must be made to knock down the solid barrier of pernicious customs and traditions. In his attempt to remove these obstacles to a purer faith and a fuller national life, he had hoped to win over to his side the professors of Sanskrit lore, of which he was himself a master and which, he believed, could never if rightly interpreted countenance them. But he found rough and unrelenting combatants in the exponents of the ancient learning, and his disgust at their conservatism and intolerance was probably reflected

in some measure on the studies with which he had found these moral weaknesses associated. On the other hand, he won the support of Europeans of every shade of opinion in his iconoclastic activities. He contrasted also their open-mindedness and exuberant energy with the paralytic credulity of his own people and their stolid indifference to their concerns, and he drew his conclusion from the comparison. His early hatred of the English as interlopers in his native land gave way to a genuine admiration for their intellectual and moral conceptions. And thenceforth he welcomed the new light from the West as a reliable guide for his community on the difficult way to progress.

Impressions like those of the Raja would have given birth to pious wishes or at best to half-hearted measures in ordinary men. But they bore different fruit in his mind in which was united a practical sense unclouded by sentiment with a resolute will which took no account of the chance of failure or the certainty of censure. It was out of the question for him to keep on fairly good terms with those who had thwarted him in what he considered to be the noblest task that man could achieve, *viz*, the amelioration of a fallen race. So he left their cloudy mysticism to examine the sordid realities of their daily life which he turned inside out for the disenchantment of the public. It was, indeed, his endeavour thenceforth to turn reason back from speculating on the mysteries of the spiritual universe

to consider the plain facts of this world which had been overlooked. And the more he pondered over them, the more fully was he convinced that the salvation of his race lay in its adaptability. Hence as he turned away from the traditions of earlier centuries, he pointed to the new light which should enable his countrymen to square the conditions of their existence with the significant truths of science, history and political philosophy.

He was, of course, fully sensible of the worth of the great ideas enshrined in Sanskrit literature and philosophy. But as they were matters of clear vision for him, he seems to have assumed that they formed a permanent heritage of his race or could be mastered at any rate without systematic and reverential study. It was an error, though error of a type to which great men are peculiarly liable in so far as they apply their own measure to others. Raja Ram Mohun Ray did, indeed, set up a school where the scriptures of the Hindus were to be taught alongside of the literature and science of the West. But it was a tentative effort and not a systematic attempt at a synthesis of the two cultures in which each should find its bearing and value determined with reference to the other. He recommended also the granting of stipends to Pandits when he took exception to the decision of Government to found a Sanskrit College in Calcutta. He suggested, however, no arrangement by which the one-sidedness of their education might be gradually corrected in the

light of new ideas and interests. Doles were to be given to them and for the rest they were to be left alone to pursue their old studies in their own way. But to leave them where they had been for centuries was in an age of progress the most effective way of degrading them and robbing them of beneficent influence. They had probably richly earned this scornful charity by their attitude towards the reforming activities of the Raja. But the culture and faith which they represented and which still commanded a distant respect even among the most advanced suffered at the same time though they were pre-eminently fitted for expansion by the absorption of new elements. An attempt to improve them had failed, indeed, if we judge by the immediate results of the Raja's campaign against priestcraft and popular Hinduism. But it was probably too much to expect the renovation overnight of the traditions of ten centuries or more, traditions which had been hardened, moreover, by persecution and by the unsympathetic attitude of innovators. Sudden and startling effects could not be looked for in the circumstances, while reliance might have been placed on the silent and penetrating though necessarily slow influence of a sound educational policy pursued with steadiness and patience. The policy, however, which the Raja had a hand in shaping was not sound in so far as it taught the aspirants to the new learning to depend entirely on it for guidance and offered no chance to the exponents of the old of having their

prejudices rubbed off by the impact of new ideas. The two cultures therefore which by their interfusion might have ensured harmonious development drifted steadily apart as regards the avowed aims and general attitude of mind of their respective champions.

Raja Ram Mohun Ray's pronounced distaste for the traditional learning and the value which he set on the application of science to life could not blind him however to the great truth that the highest education must be predominantly moral and cultural. But as the fundamental conceptions of all creeds and systems of morality appeared on examination to be identical he assumed that whatever was essential for the proper development of the higher powers might be obtained by drinking at the fountain of western learning. At the same time no one was more fully aware than he of the importance of forms and of the influence of the sacred past in investing the abstract principles of religion and ethics with a soul compelling authority. He was thus inconsistent with himself in supposing that the rules of right thinking and just action might be sought with advantage in any quarter. And the weakness of his position manifested itself soon in the moral sphere where the cast of society had created rights and obligations the special meaning and emphasis of which were not to be found in a foreign literature. He had hoped that lofty ideals might pass into the life of the nation through this medium and his hope was justified by

events. But other ideals equally lofty were more or less lost sight of, owing to the failure to effect a synthesis by comprehension of the two cultures.

It is true that what is evident in the retrospect today might not have been very clear in Raja Ram Mohun Ray's time. Besides, his hopes and wishes in the matter of education were perhaps no more than an intensification of those suggested by peculiar circumstances to the most enlightened among his compatriots. But though he could not transcend the conditions of his age any more than they, yet those conditions did not unequivocally point to a complete break with the past as the only cure for intellectual sterility and moral paralysis. Inveterate prejudices stood, no doubt, in the way of a correlation of the two kinds of knowledge, and the people seemed to require a potent stimulus like that furnished by western literature. But no experiment worth the name had been made in the way of such a correlation. And even if it were conceded that a comprehensive scheme of education was not the need of the hour, such a concession would not warrant the view that what appeared to be the right thing to him should have passed as such even after its mischievous consequences had manifested themselves. History is a bootless study if it leads to unavailing regrets or inculcates a belief in the finality of the established order.

That order so far as the Hindu College was concerned was founded on the assumption that there

was no limit to the flexibility of the Bengali mind. Whole-hearted allegiance was claimed under it for the spirit of the age, which again was believed to be fully and faithfully reflected in the literature and science of England. There was thus a twofold abstraction which neither reason nor experience might justify. For that time-spirit could not be independent of the spirit of the past, which lived on transfigured in it. And as imaged in the culture of the English people, it was touched with the colouring of their environment and national character. The attempt therefore, to introduce this culture as a re-fashioning agent where the social and historical background was entirely dissimilar was to quit the obviously proper and attainable for an ideal of doubtful propriety. There was, indeed, much to be said in favour of it as a vivifying principle. But in translating it from its native soil, due stress should have been laid on the indigenous culture as a means of adapting it to a new set of conditions. Besides, even if it were a thing of universal applicability, education in schools and colleges alone could not have acclimatized it. For other influences were at work, influences determined by the tone of domestic life and the character of social organisation, which though not sufficiently articulate and coherent to be a source of inspiration and constructive activity, were yet strong enough to retard and even baffle its operation in certain departments of life. Hence the scheme of fostering it in its original form but apart

from its original setting was predestined to ultimate failure. Yet candour requires the statement that the results obtained by means of it were immediate and striking and had the semblance of success. For this there were two reasons. One of them lay in the character of the Bhadrakalok class in Calcutta which was open and expansive and in their readiness to welcome any ideal which promised to enlarge their contracted life and to enrich it. The other was to be found in the educational methods that were adopted and in the personality of the educators.

In speaking of the second cause, it is permissible to take as typical the training which was given in the Hindu College, for the religious influence of the missionary institutions that worked by its side was not very remarkable, while the moral impressions that they made were not unlike the successful appeal that came from a purely secular education on behalf of well-ordered affections and a well-regulated life. The first Christian institutions were based, indeed, on the doctrine that "the tree of knowledge without the tree of life could only tend to sin and misery." Such, for instance, was the college opened in 1818 by the Baptist missionaries of Serampore as a training-ground for Christian Pandits. Such, again, was the sister institution at Sibpore which had been started earlier in the century for the education of missionaries of the Anglican Church. Education, these worthy people thought, should be but the handmaid of evangelisation. But the influence of

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On one point especially, viz., on the need of a complete overhauling of the social and religious system of the Hindus, the lay teachers were in perfect agreement with their clerical collaborators. This system however they were forbidden to attack directly by the pledge of neutrality offered to the people by Lord Wellesley in 1804 and confirmed on several occasions by his successors. But the curriculum and the books prescribed for study served their purpose admirably well. The characteristic productions of the eighteenth century were placed in the hands of their apt pupils and these just suited the new temper which had been goaded by mysticism and the drab monotony of an old-world and almost purposeless existence into seeking a guide that might point the way to more comprehensible ideals. To such a spirit the message of the chief English writers of this epoch was both an inspiration and a snare. It was easy to appreciate their robust and unromantic faith in reasonable thought.

and their distrust of rapturous emotions. Besides, they could impress better than other writers by the apparent justice of their observations especially as they did not aspire to transcendent heights and were able to speak a clear and harmonious language. Deep they were not, but they were clear and without overflowing full. And their inability to appreciate other forms of culture was disguised by their incomparable self-complacence based on the conviction that the prosaic light of commonsense was a safer guide in all matters than the flash lights of enthusiasm and genius.

Their works breathed a sense of ease in the world and an interest in its manifold concerns which were particularly grateful to the Bengali temper in the intellectual fatigue that had followed centuries of almost infertile speculation. And equally grateful was their disposition to resolve morality into a sweet reasonableness and piety into a convenient faith in Providence unruffled by awkward questionings or by doctrinal fervour. They did not, indeed, reduce life to the things that come within the categories of physical existence, but they managed to keep apart such spiritual insight as they possessed from the preoccupations of everyday life. The separation was by no means new in Bengal, but it was one which the highest indigenous learning had always consistently repudiated. The new knowledge, however, did not seem to blind men to the things that are unseen; it demonstrated on the contrary the possibility

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Nor could this extravagant estimate be corrected by a reference to the philosophers and their acknowledged masters. Locke and Bacon, for their outstanding features were an attitude of contempt towards previous systems of thought and a facility of comparatively superficial analysis that won the admiration of those who were dissatisfied with the misty conceptions of Indian philosophy. Even the truths and theories of physical science were recognised as positively hostile to every phase of Indian thought. Science is today modest in its claims and guarded in its forecasts. Instead of endeavouring to divest the world of majesty and beauty, it 'borders on the romantic on one side and touches the philosophical on the other'. And while increasing immensely our intellectual and material possessions, it intensifies our sense of mystery in a manner that even poetry and philosophy have failed to do. But its first triumphs led to the formulation by its exponents of extravagant and even impossible claims on its behalf. And though they managed to keep on fairly good terms with Christianity, in India at least they and their apt pupils were at no pains to reconcile the insistent claims of their new principles with loyalty to an ancient tradition.

Among other works that powerfully appealed to their imagination were those that focussed the thoughts and sentiments to which currency had been given by the French Revolution. They thus learnt and laid to heart the doctrine of natural rights and

of seeking worldly success without closing the windows of the mind and the soul. Hence there appeared to be only a difference of emphasis on the claims of our spiritual nature in the rival cultures. And so the more clear sighted and ambitious among the youths of Calcutta did not hesitate long in making their choice between the two. They found that the new knowledge was immensely superior in variety and scope to the old and that it recognised no limits to the achievements of the speculative intellect. And what was more they saw also that the earth and the fulness thereof had been granted to its votaries.

The lesson thus learnt was fixed in the mind by familiarity with the English historians and philosophers to whom they had access. These historians sang the triumph of European arms and European arts without stopping to examine the social and psychological aspects of culture contact and culture transmission or to discuss the genesis progress and decay of beliefs and institutions under the stress of ever changing circumstances. The life history of races as contemplated from their special angle of vision was summed up in the annals of discovery conquest and material progress i.e. of all those elements which were conspicuously lacking in the experience of the modern Hindu community. Hence those who saw through their eyes learnt to disparage everything Indian and to ascribe finality and completeness to the ideas and achievements of the West.

misgovernment and tyranny. It gave a new sense of corporate life which overrode the old but firmly fixed barriers of caste and creed. It breathed new hopes and desires and seemed to confer the faculty of quick and straight vision in matters from which the gaze of the people had been averted by social conventions. And lastly it weakened the hold of certain beliefs and practices, which, whatever their origin might have been, had by association with religion acquired an appearance of sanctity that they did not certainly deserve.

But the message of this learning owed much of its directness and compelling force to the character and attitude of the men who delivered it. Of the best of them, it may be said that teaching was their profession not by chance or necessity but as a result of deliberate choice and for a clear and dearly cherished purpose. They saw how the community which they intended to serve was isolated in its prejudices of caste and race and weakened by that isolation as well as by the fetters which it had forged for the intellect and the will. And they decided to destroy ruthlessly all the real and fancied barriers to progress while furnishing an incentive to it. In undertaking this spade-work, they trespassed no doubt on local sentiment and went against the declared object of the founders of the college which they served.* But they did not mind it. They had a

* See *Life of H. L. V. Derozio* by Thomas Edwards. The charges that led to his dismissal were probably

all its implications true and false. It came in fact, as a stimulating influence to people on whom custom had lain for ages heavy as frost and deep almost as life. But the half truth which it contained was not corrected at once by a reference to the claims of society and to the supreme need of self restraint for the attainment of genuine freedom and welfare. A reverent study of Sanskrit literature might have rectified the bias. It might have checked also the intemperate attack on certain salutary institutions and observances. But Sanskrit lore was discouraged as containing a great deal of what was frivolous and not a little of what was mischievous. The vernacular had a place in the curriculum and its cultivation might have kept alive their interest in the realities of the world around them. But it was neglected because it appeared to be too poor and rude to serve as a vehicle of useful information.

They parted thus with their heritage for a new possession and in doing so they sustained a loss that all but turned the lights of the new education to shade. For there appeared soon among them as a result of its imperfection a spirit of irreverence towards the past and an isolation in sentiments and manners from the bulk of the population which was a reproduction in a new form of the besetting weakness of Sanskrit culture. But it is impossible to deny that western learning was by itself an immense power for good. It fostered the manlier qualities of character which had been crushed by

a formative principle it met one of the special requirements of the time. But it is equally undeniable that the movement which took place under their lead was neither steady nor free from risks. The deflection from the right line was, indeed, serious, and it was due in no small measure to the inadequacy of their equipment for the work that they undertook.* They started with an unquestioning faith in European civilisation and a profound distrust of the claims of those forms of culture that had no part in their own education. Of European civilisation, again, they failed to distinguish the essentials from the accidentals, but sought to impose it with its local peculiarities and transitory arrangements on the people of Bengal. And in their attempt to eradicate superstition, they did not see that in many instances it was the germinal form of a noble faith which could not develop and reveal itself only because the masses had not made the corresponding steps in intellectual and moral progress. They decided not to sow among thistles, but to break up the thorny ground and to weed out the noxious growth which might impede the germination of their

* Thomas Edwards is on strong ground where he says that Derozio did more than any other man to arouse, quicken and impel the thought of young India. But it is hardly possible to accept his view that Derozio's influence over the young men under his charge was all on the side of duty, truth and virtue. The subsequent conduct of men like Dakshinarayan Mookerjee and Radhanath Sildar justified the antipathy of orthodox Hinduism to Derozio's message.

singular directness of eye and an eager and disinterested zeal for the cause which they had made their own and so nothing could persuade them to degrade their mission by a collusion with petty and transitory interests. This missionary spirit of theirs was combined, however, with latitudinarianism and an absolute faith in intellectual light as a remedy for individual and collective weakness. Everything was to be examined in the cold light of reason and the new principles which they advocated were to be permitted to relentlessly crush out the old. But here they stopped for unlike the Christian missionaries, they sought to plant their edifice of moral excellence not on any form of belief but on the apparently sound foundation of utility to the race and to the individual.*

It is undeniable that their gospel of freedom and individualism was an effective driving force for a people that did not seem to move at all. Nor can there be much reason for doubting that the new cult of nationalism came largely from them and that as

exaggerated but they show the nature of the influence exercised by him.

* The following letter from the guardian of a student throws some light on the nature and drift of their activities.

I sent my son to the Hindu College to study English and when he had risen to the fourth class I thought he had made some progress in the English language. I therefore forbade his going to College for I have heard that the students in the higher classes of the college become *nāstiks* (atheists).*

Their pupils learnt from them to think and care for the entire community. Thus an eager sincerity of social feeling took the place of conflicting class interests and made them united and self-conscious as they had never been before. They learnt also to look beyond their narrow, unchanging world for inspiration and guidance. But their readiness to fall in with the views and sentiments of their teachers made them unduly hostile to the customs and institutions of their land, in which the experience of a long succession of centuries had more or less perfectly crystallised*. And they were equally unfair to the ways of thinking and feeling which had been fostered under the old order. The eye altering altered all, time-honoured beliefs appeared fantastic and impossible, and everything, in fact, that was of the old pattern and lineament excited their disgust. Thus offices of kindness and civility came to be neglected because they had been invested with a ceremonial character that appeared absurdly formal.

* The following translation of a passage from the autobiography of Dewan Kirtic Chandra Ray is indicative of the attitude of those, who had an English education.

Our people had been taught for centuries to regard the drinking of wine as the cause of manifold evils and crimes and so they had come to believe that they would defile their bodies by touching it. But when we saw that an intelligent and highly civilised race like the English were fond of it, we decided that it could not be injurious. And we thought also that we could not become civilised or get rid of our ancient prejudices unless we drank it.

good seed But in preparing the soil in this manner they destroyed much that was of permanent value much that by virtue of its beng slightly touched with the colouring of superstition appealed more effectively to the feelings of awe and wonder than any colourless faith could have done

There were thus grave defects in their method and outlook and yet they found the minds of their pupils flexible to all the purposes of their haughty educational policy Among the circumstances which created this plastic suavity must be included the spirit in which these teachers did their work They believed indeed in the superiority of western civilisation but there was no piggishness about the belief nor did it foster an aristocratic aloofness from those who had no heritage in their culture On the other hand it gave a remarkable coherence and unity to the scheme of regeneration which they took in hand It lay at the root of all their efforts and coupled as it was with a generous faith in the capacity of the Bengali race for improvement it invested them with the character of monitors who were not dreamily sentimental but pointed to a realisable ideal Thus they had the commanding tone of men who turned to literature and history not for the sake of refined self indulgence but with a view to life and practice Men like Derozio and Captain Richardson were adored and came in spite of their obvious failings to be regarded as infallible guides

the community, when in certain respects they were little better than beacons which might enable it to avoid rocks and quicksands. At the same time, their ceaseless attitude of oppugnancy to the champions of the old learning confirmed the latter in their equally unreasonable assumption that their culture was perfect and needed no improvement from age to age.* Thus by a cruel irony of fate those who might have developed and purified the ancient culture by assimilating to it the knowledge of the West were converted into perpetuators of ignorance and conservatism. But fate alone was not to blame, for it was a natural consequence of the unsystematic way in which the Committee of Public Instruction addressed itself to the solution of a difficult problem.

In drawing the moral from the failure of the committee, allowance must be made, of course, for the discouraging circumstances in which they evolved their policy and strove to give effect to it. State education was then a new venture, and so a reference at every step to public opinion and to the wishes and expectations of the masters in England was all but inevitable. But to the vocal part of the Bengali public, the indigenous culture seemed like a

* The pupils of Derozio started an English paper, the chief object of which was to denounce the Hindu faith and culture. One of the articles that appeared in it and that attracted some attention at the time had for its subject the proposition,—If there is anything that we hate from the bottom of our hearts, it is Hinduism.

to their chastened vision. And even sacred relations lost some of their sanctity wherever the traditional laws of propriety were rejected on the ground that they had no analogues in the west *

They decided in fact not to set their old house in order, but to build a new house for themselves on the scrap heap of discarded institutions or if possible to cross over from one set of conditions to another. The sharp contrast between their own inefficiency and the enterprise and success of the English had led them to conclude that the world of the latter flowed with milk and honey, and they had longed passionately for a place in it. It was easy, therefore, for their teachers to indoctrinate them with even the prejudices of the English people. And the method of producing conviction that was adopted was doubly effective because it consigned to undeserved neglect the interpretation of life that was contained in the literature of the land. For thus the opportunity was lost of correcting the deflections of contemporary judgment by a reference to the majestic standards of the past. Their minds became what they contemplated as they had no glimpse of what lay beyond it. And their incomparable self satisfaction led them to assume that they were models for

* For a just estimate of the effect of western education in this period the reader is referred to the late Raj Naram Bose's *Autobiography* and to a very interesting lecture by him on the change that had come over Hindu Society in Calcutta as a result of it. Both of them are in Bengali.

of the administrators to ruffle seriously the vast calm waters of oriental thought. In this tangle of circumstances it would have been hard for any committee to develop a comprehensive scheme with due regard to the apparently inconsistent claims of the rival cultures. And it was harder still for the committee as then constituted, for there was division in its ranks. Some of the members read the signs of the times in the attitude of those Indians with whom they came into frequent contact, while the yearnings and convictions of the people at large remained voiceless for them. They contrasted probably the success of the Hindu College with the unsatisfactory state of the subsidised learning in the Sanskrit College and the Madrassah and they drew their own conclusion from it. In any case they failed to lend their whole-hearted support to proposals for assigning its proper place to the indigenous culture. It is inconceivable that men like Wilson, Harington and Shakespear had any doubts on the question. But the apologetic vein in which they spoke in their reports and letters of their attempts to find some room for it in the scheme of education shows clearly enough that they had to carry with them men who held different views. This lack of cordial understanding and thorough co-operation sat like a curse on them paralysing

ever in short tends to make men wiser and better and happier here and hereafter—all are desirous to be given in due season to the people of India.

blind alley in which the intelligence and energy of the race had for ages poured themselves to futility. And to the Court of Directors one thing alone was clear amid the confusion of shifting opinions, *viz*, that for the education which was to cost them annually a lakh of rupees they should have an adequate return in loyalty and efficient service †. There was also a natural disinclination on the part

† The committee had certainly at the outset more liberal views on the subject as will appear from the following extract from a note of the 17th July 1823 by Holt Mackenzie

It is not then I conceive the wish of Government that the people should be merely taught what is necessary to make them expert agents of the civil administration of the country as now administered. It is not desired to keep from them any species of knowledge that can enlighten their minds or improve their moral feelings. Caution indeed must be used in admitting the light to the morbid sense. But the darkness is not the less deplored nor its ultimate removal the less sought. The probable effects though distant of the more general diffusion of knowledge are not blinked. But to keep the people weak and ignorant that they may be submissive is a policy which the Government decidedly rejects. Its aim is to raise the character to strengthen the understanding to purify the heart and what ever therefore can extend the knowledge of the people what ever can give them a juster conception of the true relation of things whatever can add to their power over the gifts of nature or better inform them of the rights and duties of their fellow men whatever can excite invention and invigorate the judgment whatever can enrich the imagination and sharpen the wit whatever can rouse to steady exertion and bind to honest purposes whatever fits man to bear and improve his lot to render his neighbour happy and his country prosperous what-

their administrative energy And it was probably responsible in part for their inability to restore Sanskrit to the curriculum of the Hindu College and to advance beyond the mechanical dovetailing of an elementary knowledge of English with the oriental studies in the Sanskrit College and the Madrasah

They might have expected an increasing fulfilment of their aims through the coming years But this was denied to them as the cleavage of parties became more pronounced as the years wore on It has been said that the controversy between them and their recalcitrant colleagues was about the relative fitness of eastern learning and that of the west for the purposes of a complete education But not even the sturdiest of the Orientalists advocated the exclusion of the new light or questioned the utility of a knowledge of English* The difference was really about the degree of emphasis that should

* Vide J H Harington's *Observations suggested by the Provision in the late Act of Parliament for the Promotion of Science and Literature among the Inhabitants of the British Possessions in India June 19 1814* The conclusion at which he arrived is given below in his own words

My own idea on an imperfect consideration of so extensive a subject is that both of the plans noticed above have their advantages and disadvantages that neither the one nor the other should be exclusively adopted but that both should be promoted as far as circumstances may admit To allure the learned natives of India to the study of European science and literature we must I think engraft this study upon their established methods of scientific and literary instruction

be laid on it in a scheme of instruction for Indians, the Anglicists maintaining that the literature of England must be the classical lore for them in order to bring them into line with the new order and to incorporate the secret of its power into the texture of their existence. And this view, so revolutionary in its character and yet so much in keeping with the expectations of certain classes in Bengal, was punctuated by a despatch of the Court of Directors of the 5th September, 1827, in which they referred to "the daily increasing demand for the employment of natives in the business of the country and in important departments of the Government" and pointed out that "the first object of imparting education should be to prepare a body of individuals for discharging public duties." A special angle of vision was thus supplied from which the system of subsidising oriental learning and publishing oriental works appeared to involve a sheer waste of public resources. And so it came to be unreservedly con-

* The educational policy of the Orientalists was outlined by Holt Mackenzie in his note of the 17th July, 1823. "Government," he wrote "should apply itself chiefly to the instruction of those who will themselves be teachers (including of course in the term many who never appear as professed masters, and also translators from the European into the native languages) and to the translation, compilation and publication of useful works. These objects being provided for, the support and establishment of colleges for the instruction of what may be

demned as wholly unfruitful by those who examined educational efforts in this new light. They looked in fact for startling effects and were therefore, dismayed on finding that 'while the loads of learned lumber in the oriental languages under which the shelves of the committee's book depository groaned were unsaleable more than thirty one thousand English books were disposed of by the School Book Society within the short space of a couple of years. Learning as well as life in Bengal was evidently crying out for a fresh beginning. A sense, vague and obscure at first of weariness with the old arrangements had grown and worked till it seemed that fresh pulses of life must be sought in the sciences and arts of the West. The Anglicists thought naturally enough in the circumstances that

called the influential classes seem to me to be the more immediate objects of the care of Government than the support and establishment of elementary schools though these in particular places may claim attention. The natural course of things in all countries seems to be that knowledge introduced from abroad should descend from the higher or educated classes and gradually spread through their example. Hence the limited classes who are now instructed (with great labour certainly whatever may be the use) in the learning of the country should be the first object of our attention. This of course implies the association of oriental learning with European science and the gradual introduction of the latter without any attempt arbitrarily to supersede the former and it consists well with the resolution to establish new institutions for the instruction of natives in the learning of the East and of the West together.

anything that might stem or retard the tide then setting towards educational reform might prove a serious obstacle to progress. They had no faith in that complete and vital roundness in the matter of education at which the best among the Orientalists seemed to aim. And they felt that they were justified in discounting the latter's policy of a slow and gradual advance as illustrated in tentative attempts to place new knowledge within the reach of students of oriental lore, because there was no assuring evidence already of progress in the English classes which had been tacked on to the oriental colleges.

The two parties drifted thus irreconcilably apart both in their avowed objects and in their methods. And from 1831 onwards, they were so evenly balanced as to render a dead-lock inevitable. In fact, for the next three years there was no development either way of the programme that had been adopted to meet the educational needs of the community. At last the members of the committee took the only course that was open in view of the fundamental difference of opinion that existed among them. They laid before Government the grounds of their conflict in two letters which were sent over the signature of the secretary in January 1835.* As presented in these documents, the rival

* *Vide Letter No 2093 dated 21st January 1835 from J. C. C. Sutherland Esq., Secretary, General Committee of Public Instruction to the Secretary to Government in the General*

pleas seemed to turn upon the right interpretation of the Act of 1813 the Orientalists contending that it did not warrant a diversion of the educational grant from the patronage of oriental learning. But behind this narrow legal issue there were antagonistic sets of political economic and ethical considerations that pointed to widely different ideals and efforts.

The reference gave Macaulay an opportunity of recording his opinion on the controversy and he did it in the minute on education which has since become famous. It was a splendid example of party

Department? The following extract from it contains a concise statement of the views of some of the members.

This portion of our committee fully appreciates the importance of creating a taste for English science and literature among the natives the extension of which cannot but contribute to a wider diffusion of European knowledge in the vernacular dialects but they deem it to be their first duty to revive and extend the cultivation of the literature of the country and regard the introduction of the science and literature of Europe as an improvement to be engrafted thereupon rather than an object to be pursued exclusively or with any marked and decided preference.

There are others of the same division of the committee who are generally of opinion that it is not necessary nor advisable that the Government should manifest a preference for any particular system of learning and who would recommend as the most wise and becoming course for its observance that it should afford an indifferent and equal encouragement to all systems as instruction in them might appear to be demanded by the state of opinion and feeling among the people themselves.

pleading in which the social and psychological aspects of the problem were obscured by the over-emphasis of other factors. He started with the observation that the Act of 1813 could by no art of construction be taken as having dictated the patronage of oriental learning because no particular literature was recommended in it to the fostering care of the rulers. It was a disingenuous statement, as there could be no question of the revival of western knowledge among the Indians in the circumstances of the time. Equally disingenuous was his contention that the apt student of Milton, Locke and Newton had as good a title as the Pandits to be included in the class of learned natives whose encouragement was contemplated by Parliament. There was room enough for difference of opinion about the relative utility of the two kinds of knowledge, but it was the decay of the indigenous learning to which the attention of Parliament had been authoritatively called and for which a remedy had been proposed in the form of pecuniary assistance to its professors. Macaulay repudiated also the idea that the public faith was in any sense pledged to the existing system and that to divert the funds to any other purpose might be down-right spoliation. The educational measures of Government, if they constituted a pledge at all, were to be classed according to him with those promises of which nobody could claim the performance as the rights which they were supposed to have created.

vested in no individual or set of individuals. And he cited a number of hypothetical cases to clench his argument. But the analogies were more or less strained. Sanskrit and Arabic lore could alone furnish the key to the religious system and the social structure of the two great communities, whose customs, institutions and beliefs the sovereign power had undertaken to respect. Hence the oriental scheme of education which he so lightly condemned deserved a better fate in so far as it was calculated to breathe new life into ancient ideals or to prove their capacity for constant adaptation to changing social and political needs.* But he had satisfied

* How very different was W. Adams's estimate of the importance of Sanskrit for purposes of education! See his *Third Report on the State of Education in Bengal 1838* from which a few sentences are quoted below.

Sanskrit schools occupy so prominent a place in the general system of instruction established throughout the country that means should be employed for their improvement and not only an account of the influence which the learned exercise or may exercise over the remaining population but for the sake of the learned themselves as a distinct and numerous class of society.

The language of instruction in the schools of learning is regarded with peculiar veneration. It is called the language of the gods.

Instruction communicated through this medium will be received by the learned class with a degree of respect and attention that will not otherwise be conceded to exotic knowledge. Why should we refuse to avail ourselves of this method of gaining access for useful knowledge to the minds of a numerous and influential class? Sanskrit is the source and origin of all the Hindu vernacular dialects.

himself by conversation with Orientalists and by a perusal of translations of a few Sanskrit and Arabic

Just in proportion as the use of the vernacular dialects extends for the purposes of education and administration, will the value of Sanskrit be felt. It is the great store-house from which, as intellectual improvement advances, those dialects will seek and obtain increased power, copiousness, refinement and flexibility. 'Any number of new terms,' says Mr Hodgson 'as clear to the mind and as little startling to the ear as the oldest words in the languages, may be introduced into Hindi and Bengali from Sanskrit, owing to the peculiar genius of the latter, with much more facility than we can introduce new terms from English, nor does the task of introducing such new terms into the vernacular imply or exact more than the most ordinary skill or labour on the part of the conductors of education so long as they disconnect not themselves wholly from Indian literature.' Sanskrit is a pass-word to the hearts and understandings of the learned throughout India. In consequence of the established mutual interchange of knowledge if any improvement can be introduced into the system of instruction in the schools of Bengal and Behar, we may hope that it will generally work its way among the entire learned body throughout the country. All the learning, divine and human, of the Hindus is contained in the Sanskrit language. Doctrine, opinion and practice, the duties of the present life and the hopes of the future, the controversies of sects and the feuds of families, are ultimately determinable by authorities which speak only through that medium. The inference is obvious. If we would avail ourselves of this vast and various literature for the moral and intellectual regeneration of India, we must stretch out the right hand of fellowship to those who can alone effectively wield its powers, and by patronage and conciliation obtain their willing co-operation."

works that they were less valuable than the literature of his Saxon and Norman progenitors !

It is interesting to compare Macaulay's estimate of Sanskrit learning with that of Hodgson, especially as they held similar views on the need of communicating to the Indian mind the knowledge of the West and of eradicating certain ideals and prejudices that had been haunting it for ages. After advocating the freest possible resort to that literature as a means of combating ignorance and superstition and expressing the opinion that it was capable of being largely used for the diffusion of truth, the latter dwelt on its importance for the Hindu race in terms of sympathy and appreciation which he it said to our discredit, is much less known among us than Macaulay's intemperate statements. "Time," said he, "has set its most solemn impress upon it, the last rays of the national integrity and glory are reflected from its pages consummate art has interwoven with its meaner materials all those golden threads which Nature liberally furnishes from the whole stock of the domestic and social duties. To the people it is the very echo of their hearts sweetest music, to their pastors—their dangerous and powerful pastors—it is the sole efficient cause of that unbounded authority which they possess." Hodgson too feared that the interest and influence of its professors might prove a formidable obstacle in the way of progress. But the difference was certainly great between his estimate of it and that

of Macaulay, and it was the difference between true knowledge and a fluent and superficial omniscience.

The weakest thing, however, in his dissertation was the dictum that the intensity of the demand for any type of education was the decisive test of its worth and that Sanskrit scholarship was to be deprecated because it was no longer a passport to place and office. In no age and country has the highest learning paved the way to rewards other than those that a discerning public or a discerning government has placed within its reach out of regard for its excellence. But it is the peculiar glory of Sanskrit education that it has consistently inculcated the view that learning should be less a preparation for a career than a means of enfranchising the spirit. And if its professors appealed to the State not for places of high dignity and emoluments but for a modest competence it was because the best traditions of the Hindus had made their maintenance an important charge on the public revenue. But Macaulay wanted that the elite of the native population should become "English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect, while remaining Indians in blood and colour." It did not occur to him that differences of national outlook and temper might impose insurmountable obstacles in the way of such a transformation.* Nor, indeed,

* Hodgson showed a more thorough comprehension of the nature of the problem when he suggested the freest possible resort to the sacred literature of the Hindus. Two circum-

did he perceive that his anticipation, if realised, might remove the educated from the main stream of national life and even place them in perpetual conflict with the surge of its deepest impulses and yearnings

He overlooked, therefore, telling facts in the condition of the people when he held out the prospect of a facile victory for his scheme of westernisation. His minute had in fact all the defects of a preliminary survey-work, but it had also great virtues, which enabled him to leave his mark on the educational system of our country † He spoke

stances as he said, remarkably distinguished the social system of the Indians, viz its inseparable connection with a recondite literature and the universal percurrency of its divine sanctions through all the offices of life, so as to leave no corner of the field of human action as neutral ground'. Hence to ignore this literature in an attempt to improve the individual and corporate life of the Hindus was to court failure, while in his opinion the best results could be obtained by properly cultivating it, for high dated and literary as was the character of Indian civilisation, its literature had not failed to gather ample materials for the just illustration of most, if not of all parts of the philosophy of life.

† While some of us pretend to regard Macaulay's minute as the Great Charter of our education, Bishop Whitehead characterises it as the evil genius of the latter. Probably the Bishop has gone too far in his condemnation, for whatever might have been the defects of Macaulay's policy, its adoption has produced results which are certainly more valuable than any that might have been expected from the half hearted efforts of the Orientalists.

with the voice of authority when he dwelt on the sterling merits of English literature and on the wonderful manner in which it had focussed much that was of enduring value in the thought of the west. And he judged not unwisely of the effect of the impact of new ideas on those sections of the community which felt oppressed by the growing flatness of their existence and by the extravagant claims of their spiritual guides who wanted that it should be stable at the heart of a changing world. History furnished him with striking examples of the vivifying influence of a foreign literature, and he could not be blamed for assuming that western knowledge might do for the Bengalis what the classics had done for his own countrymen, that, in short, it might purify their taste and plant new sciences and arts among them. The spiritual man he passed by, but to the humbler and more pressing needs of our nature he was fully alive. Thus he had the rare and satisfying tone of reality of a man who had discovered new pulses of life in the people and was prepared to make the most of his discovery by prescribing a regimen that would quicken all their dormant faculties.

Macaulay's presence in the Council of the Governor-General at this critical time was one of the creative accidents of history. For it is very doubtful whether the educational policy of Lord William Bentinck would have been so articulate and yet so different from that of his predecessors, if the domi-

nant central note of it had not been sounded by the able hand of Macaulay. In fact its most significant features wore the garb of Macaulay's thought. Still there were other reasons political and economic for striking out a new line at this stage. Since the days of Lord Cornwallis all posts of responsibility and control under Government had been held by Europeans while only very subordinate situations had been assigned to the natives of the land. But the experiment had proved very costly and the great wars of the Marquis of Hastings had added to the burdens of the State. Lord William Bentinck succeeded therefore to a deficit and he recognised at once that the financial situation demanded his special care. He made great economies but the most important of his measures for squaring the balance sheet was the introduction of an Indian element in the subordinate magistracy and judiciary. This innovation was rendered possible by the India Act of 1833 which ordained that no native of India should be ineligible for any office under the East India Company by virtue of his religion domicile descent or colour. The paucity of qualified Indians was however still an obstacle and that paucity was due to the absence of adequate facilities for a thorough western education. At the same time Government was not in a position to provide them at a considerable expense while it felt that it could safely ride down the fears that had in an earlier period dictated the oriental scheme of education as

a means of conciliating the people. So it decided to diffuse the treasures of western culture and science among them and to withhold for that purpose its patronage from the ancient learning of the land.

Macaulay's minute was submitted on the 2nd of February, 1835, and Lord William Bentinck's resolution was recorded on the 7th of March of the same year. It declared that "the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India, and that all the funds appropriated for the purposes of education would be best employed on English education alone," that the system of subsidising indigenous learning by providing stipends for students and by financing the publication of oriental works should cease and that the resources set free by these reforms should be "employed in imparting to the native population a knowledge of English literature and science through the medium of the English language." The need of instructing the people in their own faith and of drilling their impulses and habits in conformity with its dictates was not recognised. But the Governor-General gave them the assurance that the rulers had no intention of imposing the Christian religion on them, that "the fundamental principle of British rule, the compact to which the Government stood solemnly pledged, was strict neutrality" in this respect.

As regards the Sanskrit College and the

Madrasah Lord William Bentinck announced that they would not be abolished but that when any Professor of oriental learning should vacate his chair Government was to have the right to decide on the expediency of appointing a successor so as to be able to avoid offering an artificial encouragement to branches of learning which in the ordinary course of things must be superseded by more useful studies. They were thus virtually labelled as institutions that had outlived their utility if ever they had any and the mere right to exist in a corner of an unsympathetic world till they died a natural death was conceded to them. But they might have been developed into nurseries of the highest type of teachers of whom the people were sorely in need for establishing a just relation between ancient principles and modern conditions.* Lord William

* Such a development was, in fact anticipated by Government when it established the Sanskrit College. See *Government Resolution of the 21st August 1821* from which the following sentences are quoted

The committee will bear in mind that the immediate object of the institution is the cultivation of Hindu literature. Yet it is in the judgment of His Lordship in Council a purpose of much deeper interest to seek every practicable means of effecting the gradual diffusion of European knowledge. It seems indeed no unreasonable anticipation to hope that if the higher and the educated classes among the Hindus shall through the medium of their sacred language be imbued with a taste for the European literature and science general acquaintance with these and with the language whence they are drawn will be as surely and as extensively communicated as by any attempt at direct instruction by other and humbler seminaries.

Bentinck was convinced, however, that in the dawn of the better day which he so sanguinely anticipated, the light of western knowledge would be an unerring guide for them and that it would do for Bengal all that the renaissance had done for Europe. But the cult of power and beauty and the spirit of free enquiry that came in the train of the renaissance did not displace Christian faith and ethics but combined with these to give to the western nations a wider outlook and a better judgment than they had formerly possessed. Such a combination was what was needed in Bengal, and for this purpose she required teachers who might offer all that was good in the culture of the East and of the West in real and intimate union. So Lord William Bentinck would have rendered an inestimable service to the community if instead of degrading the Sanskrit College and the Madrassah, he had extended the scope of their activities and converted them into training grounds for the spiritual guides of the people. But in pressing the analogy to which reference has been made, he appears to have forgotten that the universities of the West which received and transmitted the light of the classics were also the strongholds of orthodoxy, and that the light which radiated from them was a beneficent influence only because it was compounded of beams derived from widely different quarters.

The year 1835 had opened as an enigma, but before a quarter of it was out, a new educational

policy was adopted which has remained unaltered in its broad features up to the present day. It was not, indeed a pattern of constructive statesmanship, but it had the redeeming virtue of definiteness, while that of the Orientalists had been hesitating and even haphazard. Instead of aiming at a synthesis of the two cultures, they had tried to cater for people with divergent tastes and aspirations by maintaining the Madrassah and the Sanskrit College for one set of them and the Mahavidyalaya or Hindu College for another. Their admiration for oriental literature had been doubtless genuine but they had turned to it as to a feast of splendour and not with the conviction that in it were to be sought the real meaning and the latent possibilities of the social structure that they saw around them and of the network of obligations and interests with which it had protected itself. They had discovered abuses in that social organisation, but like the Anglicists they had trusted to piecemeal and even desultory reform, not knowing exactly where the knife had to be applied and by whom. And while recognising that vigour and scope could be restored to the ancient learning only by a combination with the new, they had not gone beyond providing a disgusting mockery of education in new fields of thought in the Madrassah and the Sanskrit College. It is true that the work which they had undertaken could not be carried to success within the short span of a single decade, and that they had to contend with hostility within their ranks and in-

difference outside. But when every allowance has been made for their difficulties, there still remain reasons for suspecting that the spirit of compromise had prevented them from acting up to their convictions and that when they were required to choose between two rival schemes of education, they failed to accentuate the view that the choice was vital because it was a choice of ends and not merely of means.

The Anglicists had a decided advantage over their opponents because they did not propose to act on the unthinking assurance that their plan would lead the people to some desired or desirable end, which could not, however, be clearly defined.* They examined the defects and disorders of Indian society from the view-point of the West and came to the conclusion that the diffusion of new light should remove most, if not all of them. Here, of course, they made a mistake, for progress depends on the interplay of factors, which are not wholly intellectual. But they were swayed by certain other considerations, which were not altogether unreal. The generous policy adopted by Parliament in 1833 and introduced in this country by a despatch of the 10th of December, 1834, from the Court of Directors had thrown open a number of useful careers to the sons

* For a fuller account of the controversy between the Anglicists and the Orientalists, see Sir C. E. Trevelyan's *Education of the People of India, 1838*. But he appears to be unduly hard on the Orientalists.

of the land and the members of the Western school wanted that they should take the fullest advantage of the new opportunities † But a wide diffusion of western knowledge seemed to be necessary for their free and extensive admission to the places of trust which the Court had in view Moreover, the influences that were assailing their impressionable minds in Calcutta and other important towns had created a genuine craving for it in certain sections of the community And of this the Anglicists had un-mistakeable proof So by a pardonable slip into domatism they concluded that the light of the West was all that they needed to set them on the way to progress

Their victory was followed by a readjustment of the educational machinery with a view to give effect to the resolution of the Governor General This was facilitated by a change in the personnel of the Committee of Public Instruction that might have been foreseen Shakespear its president and two of the leading members resigned their seats which they could no longer occupy with a clear gaze and a good conscience And their places were given to men who were wholehearted in their acceptance of the new policy Another significant change was

† The educational policy of the Anglicists had no doubt its defects But justice requires the statement that the best among them were actuated by the noblest of motives in advocating it An eloquent statement of those motives will be found in Sir Charles Metcalfe's *Minute* dated 6.5.1835

the accession to the board of two Indian gentlemen, who had made themselves conspicuous by their ardent advocacy of western education. Macaulay succeeded to its presidentship, and under his guidance it entered heartily upon the work which had been assigned to it. There was only one principle of the Orientalists which it respected, and that was to confine educational activity to the higher orders from which it was confidently expected that knowledge and refinement would filter down to the masses.

CHAPTER II

WESTERN EDUCATION

Lord Bentinck's educational policy was warmly reprobated in certain quarters. The Asiatic Society of Bengal characterised it as destructive unjust unpopular and impolitic and compared the prospective injury to scholarship from its operation with the incalculable loss caused by the destruction of the Alexandrian Library. The Muslim residents of Calcutta implored him to spare the Madrassah and to avoid taking any steps that might lead to the destruction of the literature and the religious system of Islam or to the conversion of the people to the faith of their rulers. He replied on the 9th of March to the effect that such motives never had influenced never could influence the counsels of government. And not long after he repeated the assuring observation that any mingling of the religious belief of the students any mingling of direct or indirect teaching of Christianity with the system of instruction would be positively forbidden. Thus the new scheme of education was to have the negative virtue of complete abstention from spiritual training in flagrant disregard of a cherished tradition of the East which prescribes an indissoluble union between such training and higher

education. It was also an unprecedented departure from the experience of the West, where up to that time the clergy had taken an active interest in the diffusion of knowledge. But the rulers were apparently disinclined to admit the propriety of securing the co-operation of the Maulvis and the Pandits, 'the clergy of India,' though they might have been won over to the cause by a cordial and understanding treatment.*

* It was conveniently assumed that learned Hindus would object to the introduction of useful knowledge into the regular course of their instruction. But the enquiry of William Adam on the subject showed the absolute baselessness of such an assumption. See his *Third Report on the State of Education in Bengal, 1838*, from which the following sentences are taken as embodying the result of his enquiry.

'I put a case in writing before the Pandits of the Sanskrit College and subsequently before such Pandits as I met in South Behar and Tirhoot, a translation of which with their answer and the signatures attached to it I subjoin.

'Case To the Learned—'I have observed that the teachers of Hindu learning in this country in their respective schools instruct their pupils in Hindu learning only. There are however many English books of learning, in which Arithmetic, Mechanics, Astronomy, Medicine, Ethics, Agriculture and Commerce are treated at length. I beg to be informed whether if such works, exclusive of those which relate to religion, were prepared in Sanskrit, there is or is not any objection to employing them as text-books in your schools.'—W. Adam.

'Opinion—English books of learning, exclusive of those which are explanatory of the religion of the English nation, containing information on Astronomy, Ethics, Mechanics, etc.

It was also widely and not unreasonably apprehended that the preference given to English as a medium of instruction might stand in the way of a proper cultivation and development of the vernacular. The General Committee of Public Instruction tried to allay the suspicion by a clear statement of their views in their annual report for 1835. "They are deeply sensible," so ran the report, "of the importance of encouraging the cultivation of the vernacular languages. They do not

and translated into the Sanskrit language are of great use in the conduct of worldly affairs. In the same manner as the *Rekha Ganita*, the *Nilakanthya Tajaka* and other works translated into Sanskrit from Arabic astronomical books, were found to be of much use and were employed by former teachers without blame. So there is not the least objection on the part of the professors and students of learning of the present day in this country to teach and study books of learning translated from English into the language of the gods—*Ram Chandra Vidyavagisa*, *Sambhu Chandra Vachaspati*, *Harinath Tarkabhusana*, *Nimai Chandra Siromani*, *Hari Prasad Tarkapanchanana*, *Premchandra Tarkavagisa*, *Jay Gopal Sarmana*, *Gangadhara Tarkivagisa* (Professors of the Sanskrit College), *Kamalakanta Vidyalkankara* (Private Professor, Calcutta), *Harachandra Nyayavagisa*, *Gurucharan Tarkapanchanana* (Private Professors, Burdwan District), *Panchanana Siromani*, *Bancharam Nyayaratna*, *Girvananath Nyayaratna* (Private Professors, Jessore District), *Chalrapani Sarmana*, *Chintamani Sarmana*, *Hansahaya Sarmana*, *Hari Lal Sarmana*, *Bhawani Din Sarmana* (Private Professors, South Behar), *Parmananda Sarmana*, *Kalanath Sarmana*, *Thakur Datta Sarmana* (Private Professors, Tirhoot District).

conceive that the ordinance of the 7th of March precludes this, and they have constantly acted on this construction. In the discussion which preceded that ordinance, the claims of the vernacular language were broadly and prominently admitted by all parties, and the question submitted for the decision of government only concerned the relative advantage of English on the one side and the learned eastern languages on the other." But their pledge and their explanation did not square with their activities. By abolishing from the Government seminaries separate classes for instruction in the vernacular and by leaving the indigenous primary schools to their own devices, the committee withheld from it the patronage which it was sorely in need of.

The establishment of the Medical College in June of the fateful year, 1835, was like another sign-post indicating a turn in the road. It was the fruit of an enquiry set on foot by Lord Bentinck into the state of medical knowledge in the metropolis. The committee appointed for the purpose had found that the scope of the classes attached to the Madrassah and the Sanskrit College did not extend beyond the diffusion of a smattering of European science and some knowledge of the indigenous art of healing and that the curriculum of the school started for the training of Indian assistants to European medical officers was equally unsatisfactory. And they had reported that a know-

ledge of English should be regarded as a preliminary qualification for students of medicine because that language combined within itself the circle of all the sciences and incalculable wealth of printed works and illustrations circumstances that gave it obvious advantages over the oriental languages in which were to be found only the crudest elements of science or the most irrational substitutes for it *[†] The Government acted on this report and directed

* C E Trevelyan one of the prominent Anglicists characterised the Vaid and Hakim as quacks who unacquainted with anatomy or the simplest principles of chemical action prey on the people and hesitate not to use the most dangerous drugs and poisons See his *Education of the People of India 1838* A fuller knowledge has taught moderation to the champions of the western system of treatment It is unnecessary to quote here the opinions of mere students of the history of medicine and surgery But the verdict of a man like Sir Pardey Lukis late Director General of the Indian Medical Service has a special value because his reputation was based not only on a profound knowledge of the medical science but also on extensive and successful practice under Indian conditions In one of his public lectures he said—I wish to impress upon you most strongly that you should not run away with the idea that everything that is good in the way of medicine is contained within the ringed fence of allopathy or western medicine The longer I remain in India the more convinced I am that many of the empirical methods of treatment adopted by the Vaid and Hakim are of the greatest value and there is no doubt whatever that their ancestors knew ages ago many things which are nowadays being brought forward as new discoveries

the abolition of the medical classes at the Madrassah and the Sanskrit College and of the school for the training of native doctors, which had been started so far back as 1822. It resolved also to set up a new and independent college for teaching medical science on European principles and through the medium of the English language. This decision materialised in June 1835 in the form of a noble institution, which has since done much to confer on the people the benefits of a new and scientific mode of the treatment of diseases. At its inception grave fears were entertained that the prejudices of the Hindus might compromise its popularity and success. Those prejudices proved, however, less intractable than the prejudices of the rulers, which stood in the way of a correlation of western science with the results of centuries of medical experience in the east. As embodied in oriental works, they were overlaid, no doubt, with false notions and absurd theories, the degrading contribution of ages in which independent enquiry had been abjured out of a superstitious regard for authority. But they had been obtained by methods of investigation not unlike those which had yielded a rich harvest of new truths in the west. And it was unscientific to exclude their critical study from a course of instruction designed for students who were to apply their knowledge under the tropical conditions of India. A juster appreciation of their value had been shown by the Court of Directors so early as 1814 in their

observation that "there were many tracts of merit in the Sanskrit language on the virtues of plants and drugs and on the application of them in medicine, the knowledge of which might prove desirable to the European practitioner "

Another innovation in which however, the principle of continuity was set aside with better reason was the supersession of Persian by English and the vernacular in courts and important departments of the State Persian had been the language of culture in Mogul India and was, therefore, gilded with the reflection of a departed glory But the faith and the philosophy of Islam were not enshrined in it, nor, indeed, was it a passport to any of those studies that mark off Muhammadanism from other systems of thought and practice And in the advanced portions of Bengal, it was learnt by the Hindus more largely than by their Muhammadan brethren * But its acquisition was a hindrance to the attainment of proficiency in English and the vernacular So the Hindus had every reason for welcoming the change and the Muhammadans had not many cogent ones for disliking it It was introduced in pursuance of an Act passed on the 20th November, 1837 which authorised the

* W Adam reported in 1838 that there were 2087 Hindus to 1409 Muhammadans who were learning Persian in the districts of Moorshedabad Birbhoom Burdwan South Behar and Tirhoot.

Governor-General in Council to dispense with Persian in judicial and revenue proceedings and to delegate the dispensing power to provincial rulers. In Bengal no transitional stage was felt to be necessary, and the steps that were taken received the entire approval of the Court of Directors in a *despatch of the 11th of July, 1838*.

The new scheme of education continued, however, to be viewed with dissatisfaction, if not with alarm, in certain quarters, while the Orientalists who were still on the committee did not slacken their efforts in favour of a reversion to the earlier policy of patronage of the classical languages of India. The main grievances were the transfer of appropriations from the Sanskrit College and the Madrassah to the support of English classes under the same roofs and the discontinuance of stipends to the alumni of these institutions, though many of them were too poor to continue their studies without alimentary allowances*. These causes of discontent appeared weighty enough to Lord Auckland to justify some modification of the principles laid down by Lord Bentinck. He carefully considered the question and came to the conclusion that the inadequacy of the funds allotted for the encouragement of indigenous learning was at the root of the

* See *Petition of the Students of the Government Sanskrit College to the Right Hon'ble Lord George Auckland dated 9th August, 1836*, which is given in the *Educational Records* compiled by H. Sharp.

discontent and the controversy His finding and the decision based thereon were embodied in a minute dated 24th November 1839 and addressed to the General Committee of Public Instruction It dictated the maintenance of the oriental colleges in full efficiency and the combination of instruction in the vernacular with that in English The Court of Directors endorsed this method of dealing with the situation and declared that the funds assigned to each oriental institution should be employed exclusively for its support

Lord Auckland's measure did not amount to a reversal of the policy of Lord Bentinck Nor did it aim at a proper synthesis of the rival cultures But it was calculated to allay discontent and to disarm opposition He agreed with Macaulay and Lord Bentinck in thinking that advanced English education would place instructed native gentlemen on a level with the best European officers and so allowed the committee to establish a system of scholarships for deserving students in English seminaries and to divide the country into nine educational circles for the purpose of setting up a central college in each of them † On another point

† The Educational Policy of the Committee at this time is explained by J. Kerr in his *Review of Public Instruction in the Bengal Presidency from 1835 to 1851* from which the following sentences are taken

We endeavour in the first place to give a good elementary instruction in the common subjects of Reading Writing

also there was perfect concurrence, for he declared that education in the Government schools must be secular in conformity with the pledges of the past. But the principle of religious neutrality, which he thus reaffirmed, provoked an outburst of indignation from the Christian missionaries in Calcutta, who were then taking an active interest in the education of the people. Chief among them was Alexander Duff, who referred to his minute in the following words: "While certain parts of His Lordship's minute have been warmly applauded, others have been warmly reprobated. Of the latter the two great central points are the re-endowment of orientalism, including its false religion and the total exclusion of the true religion from the course of higher instruction in the literature and the science of Europe. As the act of a Government which represents the British nation, this is neither more nor

Arithmetic, Grammar, Geography and the Elements of History. At this point the instruction imparted in the provincial schools stops. In the colleges, the pupils pass on to higher studies, embracing such subjects as General Literature, Composition, Moral Philosophy and the higher branches of Science. The General Committee desire rather to give a thorough education in a few central colleges than to multiply means of *inferior instruction in a great number of small schools*. Lord Auckland held this to be the wisest course and advocated it strongly, pointing out to the Educational Committee that the enlargement of schools into colleges, when practicable, deserved 'a decided priority of attention' in all their plans for the improvement and extension of native education."

less than a national recognition of the false religions of Brahmanism and Muhammadanism and at the same time a national abnegation of the only true religion, that is Christianity Surely, surely this is a great national sin, which if not repented of and removed, may sooner or later draw down the most terrible but righteous retribution at the hands of an offended God *

* The controversy was bitter and the combatants on either side had much to say in support of their respective positions The attitude of the Government institutions on the subject may be seen from the following observations of J Kerr Principal of Hooghly College

It is said that the Bible is not a class book that the word of God is not honoured in the Government Colleges It has been usual to represent them as Nurseries of Infidelity and those engaged in the useful office of instruction as doing the work of Satan The efforts of the educational authorities are systematically directed towards the object of communicating truth in historical philosophical and scientific subjects Are the opponents of the Government system prepared to say that the communication of true knowledge on these subjects has a tendency unfavourable to belief in true religion? Secondly it is stated that we take from the Hindus their own belief and give them nothing in its place It is true that the knowledge we communicate clears the Hindu mind of much that is frivolous and false in their own religious system But it cannot be admitted that it shakes in the least their belief in those principles which form the foundation of all religion such as the existence of God the greatness and goodness of God the Providence of God the probability of a future state of rewards and punishments

The pronounced attitude of Duff on the question of religious neutrality appears incompatible at first sight with his genuine sympathy for Indians and the reverence in which his memory is held by them. But it was quite in keeping with his character and with the nature of the task that he set before himself. He had come out to India in 1829 as the missionary of the General Assembly of Scotland, but unencumbered by vexatious directions about the manner in which he was to proceed with his work. There could have been no better choice of a man for bringing their message to the East, nor could full discretionary power have been more wisely delegated. For in Duff were united a magnetic personality, extraordinary energy and extensive learning with a singleness of purpose and a sincerity of faith that could not be obscured by the diversity of his interests. He achieved remark-

. . . Thirdly, if we look at actual results, it will be found that of the well-educated converts to Christianity, nearly as many have come from the Hindu College and other Government institutions as from the Missionary seminaries. The fact is perhaps not so strange as may at first appear. In the Missionary institutions, the youths acquire a habit of listening with apparent attention of admitting everything that the teacher requires, of answering questions on religion by rote without any exercise of the understanding. In some cases a habit of dissimulation is formed and the youth in whom this habit of dissimulation is formed is most unlikely ever to act with manliness or to do anything that demands a sacrifice such as a conversion to Christianity very often does.

able success but was never tempted to place success before principle. And he was able to reconcile the dogma of religion with the generalisations of philosophy and science. So he early conceived the idea of converting a highly literary and scientific education into a means of spreading the gospel. In his effort to translate this favourite scheme into a reality he was materially helped at the outset by Raja Ram Mohan Ray but he remained unaffected by the eclecticism of the great Hindu reformer and convinced that the new knowledge of the West must prepare the way for the fire of a new faith which was to rid this ancient society of its manifold abuses and imperfections. To the attainment of this object he consecrated his great gifts and they won for him considerable authority of which however the light of truth as he saw it continued to be the very soul. It is not strange therefore that the opinion of such a man should have carried great weight in certain quarters. But his anathema failed to destroy the equanimity of Lord Auckland who wisely decided to adhere to the policy of his predecessors. And it is only to be regretted that he did not go a step further to provide for the discipline of the will and the heart of the Hindu and Muslim students on the lines laid down by their respective creeds.*

*There was complaint from various quarters that secular knowledge was not proving an unerring guide. See H. C. Tucker's *Memorandum of the Past and Present State*

Lord Auckland resolved not long after that Government should assume direct control of higher education in the country And this decision, which

of Government Education in the Bengal and Agra Presidencies, 1843, in which after deploring that Government education was not only destitute of religion but even of morality and that the instruction given was merely intellectual without any bearing on the improvement of the heart and character, he observed that "there was a wide field of morality common to all people, of religious feeling common to all creeds, which the Government was bound to cultivate" The Christian missionary's estimate of the influence of this secular training was given once more a few years later in William Keane's *Present State and Results of Government Public Instruction in India, 1850* "I am satisfied," he observed, "that when the present race of 'Young Bengal' are grown up, you will find the moral and social condition of the country such as to require an 'ecclesiastical law' or something of the kind to enforce religious rights and duties My own experience of the subsequent conduct of those educated at Government colleges has chiefly led me to this opinion Many a time have I been reminded by their course of the Parable in Matthew XII 43—45 At first it would seem as if the evil spirit had gone out of them, through the influence of the college teaching Their condition is clean, as of one walking in 'dry places,' but finding nothing in intellectual philosophy which affords rest to the seeking soul or supplies a principle of sufficient strength to control lust and selfishness, they presently throw off all restraint, and taking to themselves multiplied additional vices of pride, discontent, drunkenness, they defile the flesh, despise dominion, speak evil of dignities and sometimes succeed in casting from them for a time the naturally implanted fear of a Supreme Being"

was arrived at on the 12th January 1842, led to certain significant though transitory changes. The General Committee of Public Instruction was abolished and a Council of Education was formed in its place with the principal officers in Calcutta as its members and a deputy secretary to Government as its secretary. But the new Council was not entrusted with the important administrative functions which had belonged to its predecessor, as the disposal of the funds earmarked for education and the superintendence of the institutions established for imparting it were, except in a few instances, vested in the General Department of the Government of India. The arrangement however, proved unsatisfactory, and the council very reasonably complained that by being retained as a consultative and referential body, it was placed in a position of responsibility, but of no real power." So there was a retransfer of administrative functions which gave to it all the controlling influence over education which the defunct committee had possessed. And thus strengthened it devoted its energy to the task of extending and popularising western knowledge which it succeeded in accomplishing in Bengal at least, by introducing a system of graded examinations and appointing trained and efficient teachers.

A still more direct and powerful impetus to the acquisition of the exotic learning was sought to be given in Lord Hardinge's resolution of the 10th of October 1844, which aimed at reserving all but the

lowest posts under Government for those who distinguished themselves by their proficiency in it * But

*The Resolution was as follows —

"The Governor-General having taken into his consideration the existing state of education in Bengal, and being of opinion that it is highly desirable to afford it every reasonable encouragement by holding out to those who have taken advantage of the opportunity of instruction afforded to them, a fair prospect of employment in the public service, and thereby not only to reward individual merit, but to enable the State to profit as largely and as early as possible by the result of the measures adopted of late years for the instruction of the people as well by Government as by private individuals and societies, has resolved that in every possible case a preference shall be given in the selection of candidates for public employment to those who have been educated in the institutions thus established, and especially to those who have distinguished themselves therein by a more than ordinary degree of merit and attainment

"The Governor-General is accordingly pleased to direct that it be an instruction to the Council of Education and to the several local committees and other authorities charged with the duty of superintending public instruction throughout the provinces subject to the Government of Bengal to submit to that Government at an early date and subsequently on the 1st of January in each year returns of students who may be fitted, according to their several degrees of merit and capacity for such of the various public offices as, with reference to their age, abilities and circumstances, they may be deemed qualified to fill

The Governor-General is further pleased to direct that the Council of Education be requested to receive from the governors or managers of all scholastic establishments other than those supported out of the public funds similar returns

the decision was resented by the Christian missionaries in Calcutta, who apprehended that it might affect the usefulness and importance of the institutions over which they presided. And their views

of meritorious students and to incorporate them after due and sufficient enquiry with those of Government institutions and also that managers of such establishments be publicly invited to furnish returns of that description periodically to the Council of Education.

The Returns when received will be printed and circulated to the heads of all Government offices both in and out of Calcutta with instructions to omit no opportunity of providing for and advancing the candidates thus presented to their notice and in filling up every situation of whatever grade in their gift to show them an invariable preference over others not possessed of superior qualifications. The appointment of all such candidates to situations under the Government will be immediately communicated by the appointing officer to the Council of Education and will by them be brought to the notice of Government and then published in their annual reports. It will be the duty of controlling officers with whom rests the confirmation of appointments made by their subordinates to see that a sufficient explanation is afforded in every case in which the selection may not have fallen upon an educated candidate whose name is borne on the printed returns.

With a view still further to promote and encourage the diffusion of knowledge among the humbler classes of the people the Governor-General is also pleased to direct that even in the selection of persons to fill the lowest offices under the Government respect be had to the relative acquirements of the candidates and that in every instance a man who can read and write be preferred to one who cannot.

and feelings were voiced once more by Duff, who led the opposition. He challenged the competence of the officials who were to conduct the examination for the selection of candidates for the public service and repudiated the implication in the syllabus that secular knowledge was a better test of fitness for it than a mastery over purely Christian literature. The Court of Directors also found fault with the scheme because it appeared to be based on the notion that the rare accomplishments of a scholar formed an indispensable qualification for public service. And in their reply to Lord Hardinge's letter of the 21st of May, 1845, they emphasised the view that "to require only a moderate and practical knowledge of English with a thorough command of the vernacular languages and testimonies of regularity, steadiness, diligence and good conduct would be the best way to obtain the largest number of candidates competent to become useful officers."

The immediate effect of Lord Hardinge's resolution could not be very striking, because it failed to win the approval of the Court of Directors. But the bias of the principal officers of Government towards a thorough European education and the eagerness of Bengali students to receive it led to a tacit acceptance of the principle which it embodied. And shortly after the Council of Education submitted a scheme for the establishment of a central university in Calcutta for the purpose of conferring degrees in Arts,

Science Law Medicine and Civil Engineering* In recommending the proposal to the notice of the Governor General they expressed the hope that if accepted it would open new avenues to social distinction and material gain for those who were devoting themselves to the acquisition of knowledge and that besides providing the State with competent and faithful servants, it would call into existence an upper class of educated men whose influence might rapidly diffuse a taste for refined and intellectual pursuits in the community Lord Hardinge endorsed the views of the Council regarding the possibilities of such an institution but the Directors stood once more in the way They wrote to him in 1846 to say that after maturely considering the subject they had come to the conclusion that sanction should not be accorded to an ambitious scheme like that laid before them The narrow ideal of education as a preparation for service in certain capacities seems still to have determined their attitude, though men on the spot realised

* For a fuller account of the scheme see Howell's *Education in British India prior to 1854* and Kerr's *Review of Public Instruction in the Bengal Presidency from 1835 to 1851* It was drawn up by Dr Mount Secretary of the Council of Education and submitted to Government in 1845 The object which he had in view was not so much the creation of facilities for higher attainments in the branches of learning that were being already cultivated as the provision of a variety of courses some of which might enable the students to find careers outside the narrow circle of the public services

that it could be much more than that and tried to act up to their conviction

Among the men who thought nobly at this period of education and of the capacity of the Bengali race to profit by it stands out the interesting figure of John Drinkwater Bethune. He was an ardent advocate of western learning and lacked probably the capacity and inclination for a just appraisal of what was distinctive in the culture and civilisation of the East. And yet his memory is cherished as a precious bequest even by those Bengalis who have lost their faith in his programme for their regeneration. Much of this appreciation is, indeed, only a natural tribute to the greatness of his character and to his genius for public usefulness. But it is due also in some measure to the ardour of his conviction that the Indian people could come to anything considerable only by means of a vigorous and wholesome education. What it could do not only for the recipients but also for those who came in contact with them, he took occasion to observe more than once.* And he rightly stressed

* See *Minute by the Hon'ble Mr Bethune dated 23-1-1851* from which the following sentence is taken

"I have never neglected any opportunity of inculcating the importance of inducing the students of our colleges to cultivate also their native language, but I have addressed those exhortations to our English scholars, firmly believing that it is through them only that we can expect to produce any marked improvement in the customs and ways of thinking of the inhabitants of India."

the view that it was a sacred trust for the proper use of which the educated were responsible to their less fortunate countrymen. It is not for yourselves said he in an address to the students of the Dacca College or for your own sake only that you are educated you are expected to be the instruments of reflecting and diffusing around you the knowledge that you have acquired. The individual might claim indeed to be trained to play his proper part in society but this he held should mean making not only a living but also a life as training could not in his opinion be liberal culture unless it succeeded in shifting the centre of interest from petty personal wants to the life and health of the community.

The specific which he recommended was limited in its curative influence. Still it had important virtues which were not apparent even to those who were busily engaged in administering it. In fact it failed when judged by its ultimate results to attain the objects that were dearest to their hearts. Western education so the Christian missionaries thought would enable them to break up the fallow ground and protect them from the mischievous consequences of sowing the precious seed of faith among thorns. But the obdurate soil defeated their expectation though it bore a plentiful crop of new thoughts and sentiments under their treatment. The secular philanthropist hoped on the other hand that the dissemination of western ideas would lead to the reconstruction of society on western principles and

start it on lines of intellectual and material advance which were approved in the West. The goal was thus set in perfect confidence, and the race began under encouraging conditions, but it was not steadily pursued. For though the new learning bred in the recipients a spirit of experiment and a yearning for quick advance, yet the impulse did not extend beyond occasional and tentative attempts at social and economic reform.* Hence in spite of the vaga-

* Was it due to imperfect assimilation, to the difficulty that Indians are said to experience in mastering the English language and the thoughts that are enshrined in it? The testimony of two competent observers is offered below by way of an answer.

William Keane, Canon of St Paul's Cathedral, Calcutta, who was deputed by Bethune in 1850 to inspect and report on the Government colleges and schools in Bengal summed up his estimate of the work done in them in the following words—“To say that in science, history, geography, thorough grammar, general knowledge and English literature, they equalled the run of grammar schools in England, would by no means do justice to my impression. Though something must be deducted for the more showy intellect of the Bengali, still there is nothing superficial, but as far as the subjects admit, and the native minds attain, there appears a solid proficiency and good grounding in the instruction given.”

In 1852 Principal Woodrow of the Martiners observed that “though under his care there were many whose parents loved to tell them of a home in ‘dear old England’ he had none who knew the language of that home so correctly, or were so familiar with its stores of learning as these Hindu youths.”

It may be thought at this distance of time that a certain degree of excellence was secured at the cost of comprehensiveness. But a reference to the curriculum of the Hindu College

ries of the first students of English literature and the activities of certain sects which ultimately seceded from the pale of orthodoxy Hindu society remained practically unaltered both in its physiognomy and organisation. The alien culture failed not only to bring about a break with the past but led to a revival of interest in and loyalty to ancient ideals and ways of thinking though the need was generally recognised of a revision of them.

This apparent failure however was in reality the most signal of triumphs. The literature of England could not help inspiring even a dependent population with a certain independence of spirit and some measure of self respect. Those who studied it learnt in course of time that their salvation lay not in servile mimicry but in an honest and manly effort to raise themselves in their own way. Hence they heard or supposed that they heard a clear call ringing out of the depths of the past which had been voiceless for generations. Here was the origin of the

and other Government institutions and to the list of text books read in them will convince the reader that the course for the highest classes was at least four times as long as that for the B. A. examination in these days. It included English Literature History and Political Economy Mathematics Mental and Moral Philosophy Science Logic and Philology and Vernacular Composition and Essay Writing. And some of the books which were prescribed would be considered now too stiff or too advanced for undergraduates. (For some account of the course in 1848 see Rev. James Long's *Handbook of Bengal Missions*.)

reorientation of aim, which has appeared a mystery to many thoughtful observers. The new knowledge sent them back to their old traditions, and they hoped to discover in these a base broad and deep-set enough for their reconstructive activity.

Quite different, indeed, was the attitude of the first students of English literature, who believed that their lights were before them, while all behind was shadow. But theirs had been a provisional age, an age of assimilation and recuperation marked by the indiscriminate gathering up of the discoveries and assumptions of others. Besides, even in it class interests had widened into the consciousness of commanding national concerns, while the golden age had been recognised as lying unrealised in the future. A long step forward was taken, however, when educated men appreciated the superiority of initiative and reform to mere imitation as elements of progress. The weak adoption of the externals of a foreign civilisation was not indeed given up at once, nor was there a public repudiation of unworthy prejudices, though many scouted them in the privacy of their hearts. Still the moral gain was immense in the acceptance of the new principle which was neither wholly retrospective nor based on a supercilious contempt for the past.

This principle may be defined as conservatism tempered by the realised need of keeping an open mind. It invaded even the Sanskrit College which had been consecrated as it were to the fatal correct-

ness of an ancient and stereotyped routine Its doors were thrown open to non-Brahmins in the teeth of caste prejudice which had effectually guarded it against such intrusion The needlessly difficult method of learning Sanskrit which seemed to have been designed to perpetuate an artificial monopoly was replaced by a simpler and easier process of acquisition And the arrangements for instruction in English were revised with a view to render it systematic and compulsory These significant reforms were due no doubt, to the foresight of Pandit Iswara Chandra Vidyasagara, and he was severely alone in his effort to introduce them But the thought that the spirit of the age was working with him fortified and encouraged him in the uphill fight in which he was engaged He had early felt the might of the new ideas and they had given him radiant visions of an ever-increasing usefulness for the institution over which he presided * Its mission,

* His hopes however were frustrated by the indifference of the public to the type of education which he sought to impart at the Sanskrit College and by the failure of Government to provide suitable openings for its alumni The Council of Education resolved in 1854 that the students of the Sanskrit College should be so trained that they might form a most efficient class of vernacular teachers as well as a most efficient class of contributors to an enlightened Bengali literature A number of them were accordingly provided with berths in the model vernacular schools established by Lord Hardinge These schools however were shortlived and when they disappeared,

as conceived by him, was to create pandits who should possess in as full a measure as he himself the austere virtues of their race and the power of adjusting their ancient thought to modern conditions.

There were thus signs on every side of a genuine renaissance in which the intellectual elite ceased to be under the spell of irrational doctrines whether new or old and sought the milder but more rational stimulus of reasonable evidence and attain-

the opportunities of earning a livelihood by serving as Pandit necessarily declined. At a later time (in 1881) Principal M-hesh Chandra Nyayaratna departed from the educational policy of Vidyasagar by opening title classes, which are even now managed on rigidly orthodox lines and in which bona fide hereditary Pandits of the old type impart to their pupils the traditional interpretations of Sanskrit works. The institution contains today a *lôl* or Sanskrit department besides the Anglo-Sanskrit College and School which are connected with the university, and so there is a juxtaposition in it of the two kinds of training instead of a systematic effort to harmonise and combine them.

The Calcutta University Commission of 1917-19 remarked that there could be no question that scholars, steeped in eastern learning counted among them men of unquestioned ability, whose usefulness to society might be enhanced if they could be brought into touch with the methods and aims of Western learning, especially in their own departments. It did not offer, however, any suggestion about the way in which this might be done, because the problem was difficult and the materials at its disposal appeared inadequate for a definitive solution. But when one takes account of all that depends on it, one cannot help feeling that a solution ought to be attempted, whatever may be the difficulties in its way.

able ideals. It was the right time for giving them the benefit of a many-sided education in every branch of which the light of truth and not the false glare of fashion or prejudice should be the guide. And indeed certain measures were taken by Government which whatever their merits might have been were obviously prompted by the conviction that the occasion had arrived for adjusting the system of instruction to the varied needs of the people. The curriculum of the Madrasah was revised with a view to impart to students in the lower forms a knowledge of English and Persian that might enable them to compete for the junior scholarship examination in half a dozen years.* Beyond this

* The record of the Madrasah had been one of continued failure up to 1853 when the Council of Education submitted the scheme of reform on which Lord Dalhousie acted. An English department had been constituted in fact so far back as 1829. But it had not succeeded and the attempt of the Governing Body to render it attractive by increasing the value of the stipends had only filled it with unwilling pupils. In 1842 the discipline of the college had been reported once more as loose and unsatisfactory. In 1847 Anglo-Arabic classes had been started for the exclusive benefit of the Maulvis but the measure had proved quite inadequate. So the Council decided to give up the attempt to combine instruction in Arabic and in English and in consideration of the vast changes in the nature and requirements of the public service and in the temper and habits of the people to provide means for combining a fair knowledge of English with such a degree of education in Muhammadan popular literature (Persian) as might be considered indispensable. But this concession to the seem

stage they were required to choose between higher English education which had to be sought elsewhere and specialisation in Arabic learning for which there was adequate provision in the Madrassah. It was

ing needs of the hour does not seem to have been more successful than previous experiments 'In 1867 the Anglo-Persian department was affiliated to the university as a second-grade college, but the number of students was small and showed a tendency to decline' So the classes were closed at the instance of a committee appointed in 1859 to report on the work of the institution

The failure of the Madrassah was due not to any lack of interest on the part of the rulers. Government had in fact been very liberal towards it and had always endeavoured to place it on a sound footing. In its infancy it had been maintained by Warren Hastings for some time at his own expense. In 1785 lands yielding Rs 29,142 had been assigned for its support. In 1819 Government had enhanced the annual allotment to Rs 30,000 and guaranteed it from the public treasury. In 1821 a suitable grant had been made for the formation of a respectable library and two years later a large sum had been voted for the erection of a splendid building in a central position. Moreover, the Committee of Management had been busy in noting defects and formulating schemes of reform. But every measure had proved abortive owing to the languid interest of the Muhammadan population in knowledge and intellectual progress. And matters could not be improved by shifting the emphasis from Arabic to Persian so long as this apathy lasted. In any case there could be no justification for the comparative neglect of Arabic within the walls of the Madrassah, which had been designed to be a great centre for its special study. The Bengali Muhammadan's interest in Persian was adventitious as is his present interest in Urdu. But to Arabic literature he must always turn for inspiration and

resolved also to establish a new general college for advanced studies in English in literature, science medicine law and engineering and to merge the Hindu College in it with the concurrence of the patrons. This ambitious scheme came, indeed in course of time to be considerably curtailed owing to the decision of Government to maintain separate institutions for professional training. But it has a certain interest in so far as it indicates what the authorities considered in the middle of the nineteenth century to be a comprehensive scheme of education for Bengali youths. The time will come observed Lord Dalhousie in defining it

when the Presidency College having elevated itself by its reputation and being enriched by endowments and scholarships will extend its sphere of attraction far beyond the local limits which it is now designed to serve and when strengthened by the most distinguished scholars from other cities and united with the Medical College in all its various departments and with other Professorships of practical science and art whose establishment cannot long be postponed it will expand itself into something approach

guidance in the same way as the Bengali Hindu turns or ought to turn to Sanskrit lore. (For a fuller account of the Madrassah the reader should consult the *Memoir of Thomas Fisher* Howell's *Education in British India* and the chapters in the *Report of the Calcutta University Commission* dealing with oriental studies)

ing to the dignity and proportions of an Indian University."

The need of such an expansion came to be felt even outside the limits of the country. And this feeling gained in definiteness as a result of the Parliamentary enquiry into educational conditions on the occasion of the renewal of the Company's charter in 1853. A number of distinguished Indian administrators were examined and they gave it as their considered opinion that an attempt should be made at once to acclimatize in India the entire educational system of England, that the lakh of rupees which had formed the annual allotment was quite inadequate for such a purpose and that, therefore, a liberal appropriation from the revenues of the country should be allowed to fulfil it*.

* Specially noteworthy in this connection was the evidence of Sir Charles Trevelyan and Halliday. The following is an extract from the evidence of the latter —

"It is not the opinion of those who are interested in education in India that enough money is spent upon it, the reason being of course that there has not been hitherto generally much money to spend. The desire is, that as fast as means can be found those means should be applied to the extension of education, it being a matter in the opinion of persons in authority in India of the very last importance, superior perhaps to all others, towards the improvement of our administration.

I should desire to treat the subject liberally and to consider it a very important branch of the Government expenditure and to be ready to lay out upon it at all times as much money as could possibly be afforded."

Prominence was also given and that for the first time to the claims of elementary education for the masses on the ground that "popular knowledge was a safer thing to deal with than popular ignorance." And it was unhesitatingly declared that the success of the British administration depended more on a satisfactory solution of the educational problem than on anything else.

The time appeared, therefore, to be ripe for the initiation of a more important experiment than the Presidency College, and so the scheme of a university which had been rejected as premature nine years ago was now taken up and elaborated by the authorities in England. As presented in the despatches of 1854 and 1859, it exhibited a definiteness of outline and a copiousness of detail that must have been the result of an extensive survey of existing conditions and of some insight into the requirements of the future.* But the narrow and unsound

† The two despatches are taken together though Act II of 1857 which created the University of Calcutta was the outcome of the earlier of the two which was sent out to the Indian Government in 1854 by Sir Charles Wood (Viscount Halifax) who was then President of the Board of Control. The despatch of 1859 of Lord Stanley (afterwards Earl of Derby) ratified the policy outlined in it and probably went a step further in declaring that if Government shall have undertaken the responsibility of placing within the reach of the general population the means of simple elementary instruction those individuals who require more than this may as a general rule be left to exert themselves to procure it with or without the assistance of Government.

view of education to which the Directors had consistently adhered, reappeared in these remarkable documents, though modified in some measure by important considerations of its general utility. The diffusion of knowledge was to be encouraged, according to them, because besides benefiting the community in a variety of ways, it would provide an ample field for the selection of capable and honest public servants and stimulate the manufacturing industry of England by fostering a taste for foreign commodities and increasing the output of raw materials † They revealed also a lack of appre-

† The trade interests of England had been kept steadily in view at the beginning, and even a missionary like William Ward had not lost sight of them while enumerating the manifold benefits of a dissemination of knowledge. See his *Letter to the Rt Hon'ble J C Villiers on the Education of the Natives of India, dated 6th January, 1820*, from which the following sentence is taken as descriptive of a state of things that education was expected to improve — "At present the Hindos of the middle ranks, not to speak of the lower, want nothing which can be supplied from England,—sixty millions of subjects requiring not one article from the governing country."

The advantage to the public service from a spread of education was realised and stressed at a later time. See C E Trevelyan's *On the Education of the People of India, 1838*, which describes the administrative change that prepared the way for it in the following words — "The system established by Lord Cornwallis was based upon the principle of doing everything by European agency. Europeans are no doubt superior to the natives in some of the most important qualities of administrators, but the public revenue did not admit of the

ciation of the vital importance of oriental learning, which was characterised once more as useless knowledge in contrast with the useful knowledge of the West. The special institutions for cultivating it were to be tolerated indeed but only because it had a certain value for philological historical and antiquarian purposes. Its capacity for linking spiritually the educated Indian with the society of which he was a member and with the traditions which formed his asset if also his encumbrance in certain respects was not even hinted at. Thus while education was rightly characterised in these despatches as a powerful lever for raising the people in the scale of civilisation an important aide of it which consists in the formation of character was almost entirely ignored.

So far there was a confirmation of the principles on which schools and colleges had been run in Bengal for nearly a quarter of a century. But the policy of confining the educational efforts of the State to an influential minority in the hope that knowledge would filter down to the lower classes was set down as narrow and unsatisfactory. It had been bequeathed as an official legacy by the defunct

employment of a sufficient number of them. The wheels of Government thus soon became clogged. More than half of the business of the country remained unperformed and at last it became necessary to abandon a plan which after a fair trial had completely broken down. The plan which Lord William Bentinck substituted for this was to transact the public business by native agency under European superintendence.

Committee of Public Instruction, but its operation had not led to the dissemination of "useful and practical knowledge suited to every station in life among the great mass of the people." The expediency, therefore, of sitting down with folded hands because they made no demand for light was questioned, and a departure was recommended from the system which had enabled only a few to luxuriate on the blessings of a liberal culture and left the rest to starve in ignorance. The advantages of higher education were not, indeed, minimised, but it was urged that in some provinces at least, public funds should be drawn on mainly for the benefit of those who could not obtain any education by their unaided efforts. Education, they stated, must be the nursery of society and not merely a seed-bed for the special culture of merit. It is to be regretted, however, that the financial position of Government led them to enunciate the educational problem as a choice between alternatives, for higher education had not reached that stage anywhere in India at which it could dispense with the watchful care and open-handed liberality of the State. Still candour demands the observation that there was every reason for directing the attention of the rulers to the needs of the teeming millions, as the few torches that had been lighted in previous decades had not dispelled in any appreciable degree the surrounding darkness.

Another notable feature of the despatches was the stress that they laid on the cultivation of the

vernaculars and the sanguine hopes that they expressed regarding their future. 'It is neither our aim nor desire, so ran the despatch of 1854, 'to substitute the English language for the vernacular dialects of the country. These languages and not English have been put by us in the place of Persian in the administration of justice and in the intercourse between the officers of Government and the people. It is indispensable, therefore that in any general system of education the study of them should be assiduously attended to.' How this was to be done was also made abundantly clear by the statement that they should rank by the side of English as media for the diffusion of European knowledge and be cultivated along with it in the high schools in the country. And lastly there was the confident forecast that when their merits and possibilities were rightly appreciated, they would be 'gradually enriched by translations of European books and by the original compositions of men whose minds had been imbued with the spirit of European advancement'."

* These clauses sound like echoes of the reiterated observations of Bethune on the subject. In the course of an address to the students of Krishnagar College he said—The English language can never become familiar to the millions of Bengal. The ideas which you gain through English will by your help be gradually diffused by a vernacular literature through the mouths of your countrymen. But though his view influenced a number of talented and educated Bengalis and Madhusudan

It was thought, however, that a knowledge of English must 'always be essential to those natives of India, who aspired to a high order of education'. And in view of the creditable attainments in it of some of them and of the readiness in certain quarters to overcome the difficulties of a foreign language as also of the success of the Medical College and the need of providing suitable training for other learned professions, sanction was accorded to the creation of universities at the principal seats of culture. Their establishment, it was hoped, would materially encourage the cultivation of the higher branches of learning and the pursuit of certain important avocations, while the examinations conducted by them would lead affiliated institutions to maintain a fairly

Dutt in particular, yet the fact remains that no great attempt was made under the auspices of the Council of Education to improve the standard and method of instruction in the vernacular. J. Kerr maintained, indeed, that students in colleges 'did not cultivate English to the neglect of their own tongue and that though they could not attain proficiency in that high style which consisted in a superfluous infusion of Sanskrit words, they learnt to speak and write correctly and as far as was needful elegantly the language of business and of daily life among the more intelligent classes of the community' (See his *Review of Public Instruction in the Bengal Presidency from 1835 to 1851*). But what their proficiency could have been may be guessed from the statement of one of his best pupils, the late Raj Narain Bose, that Bengali was taught for a time at the Hindu College by a man who had been a cook in an opulent family and had no sort of previous training which might justify his appointment to a lectureship.

high standard of efficiency. The necessary organisations were found in the Council of Education at Calcutta and the Board of Education at Bombay to each of which it was proposed that a few members should be added to represent the different systems of education over which they might be called upon to preside. But the catholicity of these governing bodies was sought to be guaranteed at the same time by a clause which forbade the inclusion of subjects connected with religious belief within the scope of their examinations.

The despatches left the framing of detailed rules for the examinations to the proposed senates. But the following broad principles were laid down for their guidance. The standard for ordinary degrees was to be such as might command respect without discouraging honest effort on the part of ordinary students, while that for honours was to be exacting enough to afford a guarantee of the possession of superior ability and knowledge by those who attained it. To conduct these examinations was to be an important part, of course, of the work of the contemplated universities. But another equally important function was assigned to them in the despatches, *viz.* that of establishing professorships for the delivery of lectures in certain branches of learning. Chief among them were law and civil engineering, but the claims of the vernaculars and of the classical languages of India were not ignored. On the contrary, a strong plea was put in for the

latter on the ground that a knowledge of Sanskrit, 'the root of the vernaculars of the greater part of India' was necessary for successful composition in them, while 'Arabic, through Persian, was one of the component parts of the Urdu language, which extended over so large a part of Hindustan and was capable of considerable development.'

The control of schools and colleges in Bengal had been entrusted so far to the Council of Education. But it was felt that the senate in which the Council was to be absorbed might not prove a suitable agency for exercising that thorough surveillance which was necessary for efficiency and progress. Hence the despatches recommended the transfer of this important duty to a department of Government, presided over by an expert educationist and composed of an adequate staff of inspectors. But as public revenues would have to be drawn upon in order to meet the cost of this machinery of supervision and of certain improvements in the system of diffusing useful information, Government was also advised to rely largely and increasingly on private enterprise and local resources for the extension of higher education in the country. Such a reliance, it was held, would not be detrimental to its cause if a grant-in-aid system similar to that of England was introduced to foster and develop the appreciative spirit in which western knowledge had been received by the people.

Such were the principal recommendations of the

despatch of 1854 In breadth of outlook as well as in that practical logic which defines the goal and sets the pace instead of indulging in vague suggestions it surpassed previous minutes and despatches on the subject The policy that it outlined was no doubt an amplification in various respects of old familiar principles rather than a deviation from them But the decision and coherence with which they were expressed prevented the administration from groping in a maze of unconnected recommendations Its observations specially on the utility of the vernaculars as media of instruction and on the need of cultivating them and the parent languages had all

the assumption that higher education could continue to develop on the right lines without an increasing attention and support from the State

Steps were taken almost immediately after the publication of the despatch to relieve the Council of Education of the superintendence and control of educational institutions, and before a couple of years were out a new department of Government was created with a Director of Public instruction as its head and a number of inspecting officers of different grades to assist him. But for many a year very little was done for the diffusion of useful knowledge among the masses, which had been placed in the forefront of the recommendations. Bengal had not to wait long, however, for a university. The Government of India appointed a committee to work out the details on the lines laid down by the despatch. But an important part of its programme, viz., the foundation of university chairs, was left out of the terms of reference on the ground that the establishment of the Presidency College in Calcutta had rendered them unnecessary for Bengal. Thus the scope of the proposed university was cut down at the outset with the object of converting it into an apparatus for testing the value of the education obtained elsewhere. And no effort was made at any subsequent stage of the proceedings to restore to it a wider field of useful activity. Hence the bill of incorporation which was passed as Act II of 1857 limited its function to "ascertaining by examination

the persons who had acquired proficiency in different branches of literature, science and art, and rewarding them by academical degrees as evidence of their respective attainments "

Public men and administrators were selected to form its senate and syndicate. There was also a sprinkling of teachers, but the determining voice did not rest with them. So the university was in no sense a corporation for the advancement and diffusion of learning. But the limited purpose which it was designed to fulfil had a peculiar importance in the circumstances of the time, and that purpose was better served by a board composed of men not directly connected with the work of teaching. For the divergent ideals of the Government and the mission colleges might have prevented the representatives of these institutions from holding out their hands to one another in a spirit of comradeship and helpfulness, while a mutual understanding among them and a common standard were necessary for the progress of higher education in the land *. Such a

* The divergence was great indeed as may be seen from the following statements of two leading ministers of the Christian religion in Calcutta. "The Government schools," wrote Dr. Duff "restrict pupils to secular English literature and science while the others (Missionary colleges) superadd a large portion of purely Christian literature and the latter is by far the most comprehensive course including many subjects which constitute the most massive and important portions of genuine English literature. The Government schools

standard could, however, be authoritatively laid down only by a body of administrators whose official duties gave them every opportunity of studying the needs and aspirations of the people. And it was able as a matter of fact to work colleges of different types into a general scheme of instruction by deter-

cannot be conducted on other principles than those on which they now stand, and hence all Government direct interference with education should be withdrawn and the funds devoted to its encouragement, distributed among 'private institutions'." The attitude of William Keane was even more definite on this question, as will appear from the following extract from his letter to Bethune dated 12-6-1850

"I would express my deliberate opinion that learning without religion is an unmixed evil. The tree of knowledge without the tree of life can only tend to sin and misery. The living branches of Christian truth have intertwined themselves amid the dictates of wisdom, the researches of reason and the discoveries of science, so that it is impossible very seriously to separate them, and I think it by far the greatest blot on the Government system, that in a few instances the sacrilegious attempt has been made (see Richardson's Selections and other standard books at the Government schools and colleges in Bengal and Bombay) I think it becomes every Christian man to denounce a system which professes to teach English sciences, ethics and history without subverting Hinduism or teaching Christianity. I would be the last to wish for, nay, I would deprecate the favour or the favour of the State being used to enforce Christianity. But I also humbly protest against the immense influence of our Christian Government being pledged to a system, professing to educate the human mind and yet avowedly withholding from the ignorant the only wisdom worthy of the name—true religion."

mining the nature and degree of proficiency which were to be labelled with the hall-mark of degrees. The profession suffered, no doubt, in independence and initiative by such an arrangement, but it prevented education from being haphazard at a critical stage in its history.

The stress however, that was laid on external examinations as the sole tests of ability and attainment and the failure to provide scholarship with opportunities and inducements for critical study and research led to a narrowness of outlook which arrested intellectual activity and growth beyond a certain stage. And a pronounced utilitarian bias was given to the education itself by the facilities which then existed for its recipients of obtaining posts under Government as the reward of their labours. The university came, therefore to be looked upon as the gateway to a narrow world of official responsibilities and privileges, especially as there was very little in its activity to foster the conviction that it might lead its alumni through the threshold of life to a fuller and wider view of its meaning and scope. Nor was the nature of the education calculated to develop a passion for the intellectual life for while it trained those aptitudes that find their scope in the routine of official work it did not create the special interests which dominate the mind of the scholar and steel it against distractions. The predominance of administrators in the ruling bodies of the university was in this respect a defect, for the steps which they

took within it and outside gave currency to the opinion that the examinations were valuable mainly because they enabled the State to pick out suitable candidates for the public service. In short, everything conspired to encourage narrow and selfish aspirations in the students and to obscure the truth that moral and intellectual virtue might be its own reward. It is not strange, therefore, that the desire to shine in the world in the ordinary sense lay at the root of their efforts and that with such an impulse the level of those efforts was not high.

The requirements of the 'services' were kept prominently in view by those who took in hand the organisation of the university because they happened to be high officials of Government. An association of scholars would have emphasised the needs of the speculative intellect, while if the work had been entrusted to the leaders of the community, greater attention might have been paid to social ideals and aspirations. It appears, therefore, that owing to the circumstances in which the university originated and to the peculiar composition of its governing body, a particular and narrow principle of organisation was ridden too hard to the neglect of other interests. Nothing could be more unfortunate as there was very little in the traditions of western learning in the land that could correct the deflection due to such a bias. The university degree became the recognised goal of ambition, not because it testified to a genuine intellectual stamp, but because it furnished the pass-

of the new university, and it has been often made, is that it intensified the demand for western knowledge, but failed to stimulate research or to develop a genuine passion for learning. But the conclusion which has been sometimes drawn from it about the sterility and superficiality of the Bengali intellect is an unmerited slur on the community and its traditions. For those who cultivated the new lore were 'more sinned against than sinning' in this seed-time of modern progress. If they were generally content with a 'shallow and fluent omniscience,' it was because such a showy accomplishment answered, and there was no effective demand from any quarter for more substantial qualifications. Their detractors found fault with their disinclination to go beyond the surface of subjects, but in doing so forgot to make due allowance for the cramping effect of the educational arrangements which were in no way conducive to intensive study. Nor is it true that the great literature to which they were introduced left them entirely spiritless and unimproved. For it quickened their faculties and increased the flexibility of their minds, while on the best its influence was much more striking and profound, as the creative impulse which appeared among them was due in no small measure to the impact of new ideas. The modern Bengali language which has become 'the vehicle of as great things as any speech of men' was to a great extent the work of this highly cultured class. So also was the literature which grew up

rapidly in it and which was remarkable as much for its new way of looking at our old problems as for its earnest effort to comprehend the rhythm and beauty of our ancient life* Probably more might have been achieved in this direction, and classical dignity and repose might have been added to the vigour and freshness of the new literature if the culture which gave birth to it had been based on the broad foundation of what was great in our ancient faith and tradition. But the achievement such as it was was enough to refute the charge of superficiality and sterility which ignorance or malice delighted in bringing against the Bengali intellect.

Still it remains true that the vast majority of the students looked upon the pursuit of knowledge as a competitive struggle for a limited good which was not enough for all. And if the noblest among them went beyond gainful aims they found the master impulse not in the system but in the thoughts and sentiments that they picked up while engaged in what was virtually a contest for place and power. The education which they received was in many ways valuable but its ideal was narrow. What was

* The spade work was done indeed by Sanskrit scholars like Pandit Iwara Chandra Vidyasagara Madan Mohan Tarkalankar and Dwarka Nath Vidyabhusana. But the rich crop which followed we owe to Michael Madhusudan Dutt Bankim Chandra Chatterjee Dmabandhu Mitra Hem Chandra Banerjee and Nabin Chandra Sen all of whom had mastered English literature and fully profited by it.

sought and made much of was not the light of speculation nor the fire of creative energy but the ability to appropriate within a limited time a certain amount and variety of 'pre-digested knowledge'. Probably in other countries as well higher education was no more than a preparation for careers for the majority of the students. But their universities provided for the attainment of a high level of culture by a considerable minority, and on the work of this minority did the intellectual life of the communities in a large measure depend. In Bengal, however, the system stopped short of such a consummation and the inevitable consequence of the halting measure was her failure to contribute to the sum total of theoretical knowledge and to give to the scattered forces in the practical field the unity and vigour of life.

It has been said that the creation of the University 'fired the ambition of the literate classes' in Bengal. But the ambition was of a low order and had very little in common with the insatiable longing for new truths and for their application to life which had been specially nurtured in the universities of the West. Nor was it akin to the passion for thoroughness which had distinguished the votaries of oriental learning even in the most discouraging circumstances. It disappeared, therefore, as soon as the examinations were over, leaving behind not the true academic spirit, but a thin veneer of general culture and a stolid sense of superiority. But the defect remained long unperceived, because the literate

classes among the Hindus were composed mainly of people who had always valued a secular learning as a marketable possession. The best traditions of scholarship were not indeed unknown to the land. But they were confined to a limited section which was too self-centred and too unresponsive to the social passion to be interested in a movement that affected other classes. And so their ideal of devotion to study and indifference to objects of transient importance was never seriously taken up by others especially as it was suspected and not without reason that there was a pharisaic spirit lurking in its shadow.

The facts that strike the eye in following the development of education under the new system were the multiplication of high schools and the rapid increase in the number of students in colleges. Of the new institutions some owed their existence to the offer of grant-in-aid by Government but others relied almost entirely for their maintenance on the great and growing demand for secondary education. Indigenous enterprise hesitated how ever for a time to cater for those who aspired to higher studies. So the call for them had to be met by Government and the Christian missionaries. And Government acted wisely in shouldering the responsibility for the instruction of increasing numbers of undergraduates and starting new institutions for the purpose. Such a development was no doubt in violation of the principles laid down by the despatch of 1854 which had contemplated the

retirement of Government from the field of higher education. But it was nevertheless on the right lines as local effort could not be trusted at this stage to provide adequate facilities for the training of those who wanted to proceed beyond the secondary stage.

But the departure was no more than a temporary concession to an insistent demand. It did not involve a deliberate revision of the programme chalked out in the despatch of 1854 and emphasised by the despatch of the 25th of April, 1864, which advised the Government to look after the wants of those who could not be expected to help themselves and "to gradually induce the richer classes to provide for their own education." Prominence was to be given to the educational needs of the masses, and since the resources of the State were limited, higher education was to be left more and more to its own devices. Such was the settled opinion of the rulers, and it received a special value from the decision of Lord Ripon to give to the people a certain measure of self-government. For it seemed that the only feasible method of enabling them to realise their new privileges and responsibilities was to give them some measure of education. The Government of India appointed, therefore, a commission on the 3rd of February, 1882, to report on the progress which had been already made in it and to suggest measures for the diffusion of knowledge among those to whom circumstances had denied every facility for making an articulate demand for it.

The commission presented a fair and comprehensive survey of the progress of learning under British rule. But the terms of reference did not permit it to discuss in detail the relative importance of the two types of education and the shortcomings and possibilities of the University. For a sort of finality had been claimed for the design of instruction as sketched in the despatch of 1854 and the scope of enquiry had been limited to the extent of correspondence between this design and the superstructure which had been raised by a generation of administrators. Moreover the enquiry had to be undertaken mainly for the purpose of suggesting the best means of relieving Government of a portion at least of its financial responsibility for higher education so that funds might be available for the promotion of education among the masses. Thus a discussion of the merits of the accepted scheme of higher education did not fall exactly within its purview. Yet two questions of vital importance relating to it were mooted *viz*, its influence on the morale of the students and its adequacy as a preparation for the life of the scholar and the scientific investigator.

While generously maintaining that those who best knew the educated Indian had the most to urge in his favour the commission was constrained to admit that certain unlovely traits had developed in him with the spread of western learning. But in trying to account for these disagreeable concomitants of the new knowledge it did not go far enough when,

it fastened the blame on his environment which was supposed to be quite out of keeping with the dignity and refinement of his intellectual pursuits. The difference between the learned and the illiterate was not confined to India, nor was it such as to give a decided superiority to the former in every respect. Hence if his self-love degenerated into barren conceit in the atmosphere in which he passed his days, the fault lay with his training which precluded a simple and effective relation of his attainments to the needs and potentialities of the world to which he belonged, while it filled his mind with an extravagant notion of his own worth and ability. He could have little interest in the work and the recreation of the people about him so long as the knowledge which he had acquired after years of arduous toil was not directly and easily applicable to them. And yet he was able to carry his head high because his showy accomplishment was a rare possession and had a concrete value in the market for employments.

The pretentious self-assertion of the Indian graduate had its roots in the one-sidedness of his education, and the commission was not right in assuming that it was due to the meanness of his surroundings. Nor was it more successful in its quest of adequate causes and convincing explanations when it associated his spirit of irreverence with the conflict between the revelations of modern science and the outworn dogmas which still claimed

his attention.* The apparent contradiction between the shadowy conceptions of religion and the ventries of experience is as old as man and quite as ubiquitous as he. But it has led elsewhere to occasional reconstruction of the entire basis of thought and belief. Such a happy result might well have been expected among the Hindus especially as their eclectic temper and the exalted character of their theology were favourable to a reconciliation of faith and knowledge. But the educated among them turned away from religion as from a useless encumbrance in the economy of life. It seemed, indeed to some a craziness in the human make up which had to be corrected by a course of mental discipline along prescribed lines. The commission was of opinion that they were disgusted with its grosser forms and dissatisfied with the narrow principles of the traditional morality. The grosser forms however, were the creation and the delight of uninstructed minds and it is significant that only a few among the educated went beyond them. Grandeur and purity

* Sir H. S. Maine made much of this conflict when he observed in a convocation address that happily for the human race some fragment of physical speculation had been built into every false religious and ethical system that here was its weak point for here it was that the study of physical science formed the inevitable breach which led to the overthrow of the whole fabric. He had in mind the Hindu cosmogony as given in the *Puranas* and other works. But he might have paused to reflect that other religions continue to flourish in spite of the onslaughts of science for the simple reason that the vulnerable points do not constitute the citadel.

were certainly not lacking in the indigenous systems of thought and belief, but the equipment required for their appreciation had been left out of the accepted scheme of training for the majority of our undergraduates. They threw away their priceless inheritance because they did not possess the knowledge and reflective spirit which were necessary for appraising it. Thus vanity and ignorance circumscribed their outlook, and both of them were the direct consequences of the almost exclusive importance which was attached to an alien culture as enshrined in a foreign tongue.

It is noteworthy that several of the witnesses in the Punjab advocated the inclusion of religious training in the curriculum of the colleges. They proposed that equal facility should be offered in Government institutions to Professors of the prevalent creeds to look after the spiritual needs of their coreligionists. "The argument adduced in favour of such a policy was that the minds of the students were so filled with their secular studies that religion dropt out of view and ceased to influence them, and that home influence had been found in practice too weak to counteract the anti-religious, or rather non-religious, influence which exclusive attention to the subjects studied at college was exerting." But the scheme was summarily brushed aside as impracticable in the existing state of Indian society.* There were,

* The question of religious education is once more coming to the front. Sir Valentine Chrol has made out a very strong

indeed, serious difficulties in the way of its adoption, but nothing could be easier than an improvement in the standard of proficiency in Sanskrit and Arabic to one or the other of which the Indian student must turn for a discovery of the principles that should determine his relations to his fellow-creatures and his obligations to himself. As a result of the bias which had been given to his education he was leaving the university in the majority of instances not with a sense of easy mastery over these languages which might induce him to seek in their literatures for resources of faith and aspiration but with the feeling that they had

case in favour of teaching the principles of the Hindu religion to Hindu students in his admirable book *Indian Unrest*. The late Sir Gooroodass Banerjee considered that it might be beneficial if it was introduced with proper safeguards in our schools and colleges. But he took care to observe that no salutary effect could be expected from education in dogmas and in the observance of a few forms and he was fully alive to the difficulties in the way of introducing religious training of the right type. These difficulties again are emphasized and probably overemphasized by Mr H R James when he observes that in India there are many and various cults and that there is at all events the danger of reviving religious cults in favour of evil morals rather than good. The subject deserves a separate treatment on account of its importance and so can not be discussed here in all its details. But the reader is advised to consult Sir Valentine Chirol's *Indian Unrest* and *India Old and New*, Sir Gooroodas Banerjee's *Education Problem in India*, H R James's *Education and Statesmanship in India* and Pramatha Nath Basu's *Illusions of New India*.

been prescribed as subjects of study to give to the curriculum an appearance of comprehensiveness and to add to the difficulty of the examinations which he had to pass

It is possible, however, to magnify the shortcomings of the education which our young men received in the colleges. Even ethically it was an immense power for good, and the commission was justified in referring to the many virtues which it had implanted and nourished and the eagerness of social feeling which it had called forth. Petty class-interests did, indeed, expand into the catholicity of national aspirations under the stress of the new ideas and sentiments which it gave the students.* But for obvious reasons its influence on their character could not be far-reaching and thorough. If moral life consists not in the mere possession of a number of uncoordinated virtues but in the maintenance of a proper and fruitful relation with the environment, then it must be evident that in a community with traditions dating back to the childhood of civilisation, the relating principles could not be found in an alien culture alone. It achieved much in creating

* Sir Verney Lovett felicitously describes the change as the triumph of a sense of national unity over the old idea of ordained separation. Political conditions have been no doubt a contributory cause of this change, but the prejudices associated with the over-organisation of Hindu society could not have been so easily overcome were it not for the liberalising influence of western education and the circumstance that it was imparted to all classes of men.

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comparatively rare even among the best of them. And they still showed sometimes a disposition to imitate the externals of Western civilisation and to scoff at or disregard the healthy restraints of the traditional morality, which certainly did not beautify their nature. These shortcomings, however, were directly traceable to the one-sidedness of their education, which loosened the hold on them of the conventions and decencies of Indian society while it did not or rather could not provide regulating principles of equal authority and usefulness. At the same time the circumstance of its being dominated by an external and inadequate test of attainments within certain narrow limits served to obscure the view that growth in mental stature and expansion of outlook were its best and ultimate rewards. No systematic effort was made, in fact, at any of its stages to foster and train intellectual curiosity and the capacity for idealism in which the Indian character had never been deficient. Thus the responsibility for the unsatisfactory equipment of the Indian graduate was due in no small measure to radical defects in his education, which in spite of its intensely secular character might have achieved better results if it had not been fettered also by a narrow utilitarian outlook and an undue stress on an alien culture.

There was pointed reference in the report of the commission to the fact that "with a few brilliant exceptions no eminent scholars were to be

a craving for such an adjustment, but it could not possibly supply all the factors needed for the satisfaction of that craving. The missing elements might have been found and a more harmonious development might have followed if the 'second languages' had been duly cultivated. But instruction in them was so defective and the test of proficiency was so inadequate as to create the impression in the majority of students that the superficial knowledge which satisfied it was only an added burden to them if not quite a mockery.

The commission deplored that even among the highly educated morality was based to a large extent upon considerations of prudent self interest rather than upon any higher principles of action. And it suggested that a text-book embodying rules of good conduct derived from natural religion should be taught in every college. Such a suggestion however ignored the fact that morality when thus inculcated tends to become flat and unprofitable unless the teacher is an extraordinary man capable of investing the dry bones of familiar precepts and maxims with a soul compelling power by the fervour of his imagination and the spiritual grandeur of his character. Besides it was based on an imperfect knowledge of the nature and genesis of the moral evil which it sought to cure. The Indian graduate was by no means more immoral in the ordinary sense than are graduates in other lands. But high resolves that transcend ordinary ambitions and cares were

students were in the vast majority of instances compelled by poverty to earn their livelihood as soon as they went out into the world, and when once fixed in the routine of professional or official life, they found little leisure or inclination for continuing their studies. The commission expressed the opinion that private liberality should come to the assistance of the most promising among them and pointed out that while it had done much for education in other directions, it had exhibited a stolid indifference to the claims of independent investigation. But individual initiative was bound to be weak and unfruitful in the matter so long as its advantages were not clearly demonstrated. It should have been the prerogative, therefore, of the university to make a beginning by endowing research and creating an atmosphere favourable to it. But the university was content with prescribing text-books and taking examinations and holding an annual convocation for conferring degrees and honours.

When one passes from the pious wishes of the commission to definite recommendations of a practical nature, one finds that the most important were those which tried to limit the financial obligation of

commission had in view was provided before the publication of its report. Subsequent reform has been in the direction of simplifying the course for the M.A. examination in certain subjects.

found in the long list of university graduates " And the explanation which it offered of this dearth of research and scholarship was correct so far as it went. The education which was imparted was general in all but the final stage and even in that specialisation was not on lines that might lead to independent thought and enquiry * Besides, the

* The course has become less and less comprehensive with the lapse of years and so the facilities for specialisation are much greater today than they were at the outset. The subjects for the examination for the first degree were in 1858 Languages (English Sanskrit or Arabic and the Vernacular) History Mathematics Natural History and the Physical Sciences and the Mental and Moral Sciences. Any candidate who passed it and was placed in the first division could if he had not lost a year anywhere in his academic career proceed to the Examination for Honours in one or more of the following subjects—Languages History Mathematics Natural History and Philosophy. The Vernacular ceased to be a compulsory subject after 1870. A and B courses were probably instituted in 1873 but the bifurcation of studies was not sufficiently marked and the number of subjects to be offered continued to be large. Later on their number was reduced to three in either case. English and Philosophy were made compulsory subjects in the A course and English and Mathematics in the B while the choice of the third subject was allowed from among History including Political Economy Mathematics and the Classical Languages in the former and from among the various Physical Sciences in the latter. Honours courses were introduced at the B A stage in March 1862 though the result of the development appeared for the first time in the examination in 1865. Thus the kind of specialisation which the

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Government with regard to higher education Government had, indeed, decided already to rely increasingly on local effort for the maintenance of colleges in Bengal and to stimulate private enterprise in this sphere by suitable grants from the public revenue. So a full enquiry into the question in all its bearings could not be undertaken, and the commission limited its attention to matters of detail with a view to suggest rules for the effective application of the policy to which the rulers had committed themselves. It found that among the colleges there were some which supplied more than a local need and were in other ways so important as to justify their maintenance by the State. There were others which, it thought, might be transferred with advantage to local bodies on their undertaking to maintain them permanently and in full efficiency. Others however, were being run at a cost that appeared disproportionate to their utility, and these, the commission recommended, should be closed unless local efforts were made to finance them*.

The new policy appears at first sight to have been justified by events. For in the last quarter of the nineteenth century there was a considerable in

* The recommendations of the commission were only partially adapted. The Midnapore College was transferred to the control of the local Municipality and the College at Berhampore to that of the Maharaja of Kasimbazar in 1887 but the Rayshahi and Chittagong Colleges remained Government institutions.

crease in the number of private colleges, some of which rapidly developed into important and popular institutions † But there are reasons for thinking that it was a premature if not a retrograde step. Western education had no great traditions in the land, and under the auspices of the university, even Government colleges had sunk to the low level of coaching institutions. So instead of seeking pecuniary relief by cutting down its expenses on higher education, Government should have augmented its allotment to provide for intellectual activities that were not bounded by the narrow horizon of university examinations. As it was, the new ventures had no worthy ideals to work up to, no comprehensive programme of education to be guided by. They aimed, therefore, at simply preparing increasing numbers for the tests of the university, and as success in these tests did not depend exclusively or even largely on the excellence of the teaching, competition among them came to be shifted from the

† In 1884 were founded the Ripon and Jagannath Colleges, in 1886 the Victoria College at Narail, in 1887 the Uttarpara and Bangabasi Colleges in 1888 the Victoria College at Cooch Behar, in 1889 the Braja Mohan College at Barisal, in 1896 the Central College in Calcutta, in 1897 the Krishna Chandra College at Hetampur, in 1898 the Edward College at Pabna, in 1899 the Victoria College at Comilla and the St Paul's Cathedral Mission College in Calcutta, and in 1901 a branch of the Calcutta City College at Mymensingh.

quality of the work to the lowness of the fees charged for it

But whatever might have been the defects of this development it led to a rapid increase in the number of graduates. And as their ranks swelled the value of their academic distinctions declined in the market for employments. The depreciation was indeed so rapid and marked as to attract early notice even in the highest quarters. Sir Courtney Ilbert observed in his convocation address of 1885 that as collegiate education has become more common the value of the symbol which denotes it has proportionately fallen. And a few years later Lord Lansdowne expressed the same view more pointedly when he said — I am afraid that we must not disguise from ourselves that if our schools and colleges continue to educate the youth of India at the present rate we are likely to hear even more than we do at present of the complaint that we are turning out every year an increasing number of young men whom we have provided with an intellectual equipment admirable in itself but practically useless to them on account of the small number of openings which the professions afford for gentlemen who have received this kind of education. Such an estimate of the spread of higher education was in fact inevitable so long as it was taken to be but a preparation for a career within certain narrow and more or less inelastic limits. And there was very little in the scope and nature of

that education to justify the view that it was a preparation for life in a higher or a more comprehensive sense

To the complaint of overproduction, there was soon added another, viz, that of deterioration in the quality of the output* And yet the excess of supply went on increasing while no serious effort was made to remove the defects which gave occasion for adverse criticism. Thus the feeling gained ground that the existing university system had almost broken down under the pressure of the additional work imposed on it by the rapid multiplication of colleges and schools. And it found authoritative and practical expression at last in a resolution of the Government of India of the 27th of January, 1902, which announced that the Governor-General in Council had decided to appoint a Commission "to enquire into the conditions and prospects of the universities established in British India, to consider

* One of the causes of this deterioration was said to be a plentiful lack of competent teachers. Another was the undue importance which came to be attached to the University examinations and their requirements and which degraded both teachers and students. The late Raj Naram Basu refers with no small measure of indignation to this second cause in his *Autobiography*, and probably no one was better qualified to form an opinion on the subject than he, for he had a first-hand knowledge of the system of instruction that existed before the birth of the University and of the system that came into vogue after it had begun to dominate completely educational standards and ideals.

and report upon any proposals which had been, or might be, made for improving their constitution and working and to recommend to the Governor General in Council such measures as might tend to elevate the standard of university teaching and to promote the advancement of learning "

The circumstances did indeed, call for a searching enquiry into the constitution and working of the universities, and such an enquiry was undertaken by the commission of 1902 in a practical spirit of reform. It examined the type which had eventuated under the stress of peculiar conditions and instead of endeavouring to complicate the pattern by the application of untried principles, suggested measures for underpinning the structure on its old foundations. The scheme outlined in the despatch of 1854 was not subjected therefore, to a close scrutiny in the light of the riper experience of more advanced nations, nor was the need definitely recognised of a wider outlook to get rid of the ugly facts and unpleasant symptoms' which the Commission of 1882 had associated with the system. On the other hand, it was taken as the standard, and the results obtained by its operation were compared with the optimistic forecast of its authors with a view to recommend minor improvements and modifications. Such an empirical point of view had, however, its advantages, as it concentrated attention on what was immediately possible and thus enabled the commission to furnish the logical sequel to the original scheme.

The limits of the present treatise will not permit an examination of the proposals for reorganising the administrative bodies of the university or of those which were calculated to secure an effective control over affiliated institutions. But there were other proposals which have to be noticed here because they aimed at modifying the scheme of studies and providing suitable facilities for them in the light of ascertained needs and drawbacks. The commission recommended the formation of large and well-arranged reference libraries in universities and colleges on the ground that the habit of independent and intelligent reading could not be formed where they did not exist. It laid stress on the need of improvement in the methods of scientific instruction and in the equipment of laboratories. It found the course in English for the M. A. examination of the Calcutta University too easy and suggested that it should be combined with a course in the vernacular or in a classical language. It recommended, moreover, that the vernaculars should be independent subjects for the M. A. degree and that the examinations in them should be exacting enough to ensure their thorough and scholarly cultivation. It went further and proposed that composition in the vernacular should figure in every test of attainments up to the examination for the first degree in arts. It denounced also the practice which was unfortunately too common in the schools of relegating to incompetent teachers the task of imparting instruction in it

and in English and expressed the opinion that every boy who aspired to a collegiate education should be able to express himself with ease and propriety in these languages. At the same time it emphasised the educational value of the classical literatures of India, the cultivation of which, it thought, should prove a mental discipline of no mean order and pave the way for the right appreciation of the indigenous cultures and for the improvement of those dialects which bid fair to develop into media of literary expression.

These proposals were conceived in a spirit of compromise which sought to introduce necessary reforms without necessitating an abrupt transition to new lines of development. The entire report was, in fact, inspired by the desire to complete the scheme which had been outlined in 1854 and to adjust it to the difficult conditions which had been created by the multiplication of schools and colleges. This rapid growth, it was thought, had obscured the importance of a good broad training as the foundation of university study and added to the difficulty of offering suitable conditions of specialised study to the increasing number of graduates. The commission dwelt with evident dissatisfaction on the fact that the majority of educated Indians were deficient in general information and did not possess a proper command of the English language. It felt also the need of making systematic arrangements for post-graduate education which had been left till then to

the care of affiliated colleges. And it realised the desirability of opening out new avenues to useful and attractive employment by providing facilities for thorough instruction in mining and electrical engineering, in the science and art of agriculture and in those subjects which should be studied by young men preparing for a commercial career.*

* The need of providing a variety of courses to suit the varied needs of the community has been repeatedly stressed, but our educated people have always taken it as a mere counsel of perfection. "However large," said the *Despatch of 1854*, the number of appointments under Government may be, the views of the natives of India should be directed to the far wider and more important sphere of usefulness and advantage which a liberal education lays open to them." The terms of reference of the Education Commission of 1882 precluded it from discussing the question in detail. But it too expressed the hope that 'the habit of looking for employment elsewhere than to Government will help people to form the habit of looking elsewhere than to Government for the means of becoming qualified for such employment for what men feel to possess a natural and intrinsic as distinct from an artificial value they will always make efforts to obtain for themselves and for those whose interests they have at heart.' The hope, however, was not realised. And then the Indian Universities Commission of 1902 pointed out that 'the teaching of the special subjects which ought to be studied by young men preparing for a commercial career had received very little attention in Indian Colleges and schools and that in Europe and America and during the last few years in England in particular, increasing attention had been paid to the training even up to the highest standards of those who sought employment in houses of business.' But our schools and colleges still thought that they must not deviate from the beaten track unless the example was set by the University.

The scheme of reform as chalked out by the commission was adopted with certain modifications in an Act to amend the law relating to the universities in British India. It received the assent of the Governor General on the 24th of March 1904 and came into operation on 1st September of the same year. Among other things it empowered the universities to appoint Professors and Lecturers for undertaking post graduate instruction and to equip and maintain laboratories libraries and museums. They were also authorised to determine the conditions of affiliation to insist on adequate residential accommodation for undergraduates and to improve the curricula as well as the standards of the various examinations. There were misgivings in certain quarters that the restraints sought to be imposed on schools and colleges might cause a set back in the course of education while in others it was assumed that harder conditions would acclimatise sounder views about the requirements of efficient teaching and the factors of a complete education. So the measure was warmly debated in the Legislative Council and outside it and in certain parts of the country there was an outburst of criticism which amounted almost to a popular outcry. But Lord

freeing it from 'the miserable gyres and manacles that had stunted the growth of the youths of India, crippled their faculties and tied them down '

There were many in the newly constituted senate and syndicate of the Calcutta University who shared the Viceroy's optimism and looked forward to an era of progress in which the dominant influence would lie with their new educational standards. It did not occur to them that supervision and guidance could not effect much in the way of a satisfactory advance so long as the necessary driving force was not supplied by a general conviction of the propriety or utility of the improvements which they had in view * Or indeed they might not have realised how much there was in the hard realities of Indian life that stood in the way of such a conviction They

* Among them was Mr H R James, whose forecast has not been justified by events because he attached undue importance to regulations and external improvements See his *Education and Statesmanship in India* from which the following sentences are taken

"A definite impetus has been given to the improvement of both schools and colleges under the pressure of the new regulations, more money, much more money, is being spent on them There is improvement in buildings, in staff, in equipment Government has voluntarily set the example in its own colleges, but everywhere pressure has been exercised by the Syndicate to induce colleges to raise their staffs in accordance with more exacting views of the requirements of efficient teaching Unless the conditions laid down are conformed with, affiliation is refused, and this applies equally when the college asking affiliation is a Government college "

The scheme of reform, as chalked out by the commission, was adopted with certain modifications in an Act to amend the law relating to the universities in British India. It received the assent of the Governor General on the 24th of March, 1904 and came into operation on 1st September of the same year. Among other things it empowered the universities to appoint Professors and Lecturers for undertaking post graduate instruction and to equip and maintain laboratories, libraries and museums. They were also authorised to determine the conditions of affiliation, to insist on adequate residential accommodation for undergraduates and to improve the curricula as well as the standards of the various examinations. There were misgivings in certain quarters that the restraints sought to be imposed on schools and colleges might cause a set-back in the course of education while in others it was assumed that harder conditions would acclimatise sounder views about the requirements of efficient teaching and the factors of a complete education. So the measure was warmly debated in the Legislative Council and outside it, and in certain parts of the country there was an outburst of criticism which amounted almost to a popular outcry. But Lord Curzon was convinced that a thing of vital importance like education could not be left to the haphazard of casual enterprise and that to place it under the direct control of Government and of the best intellects in the land was the most effective way of

ernment was required on their part to find out that *the only useful purpose which* it could serve was to make a show at examinations. So they dropt it by the way or retained it in the form of half-understood propositions to *disguise their ignorance from others* and, if possible, from themselves. The case would have been very different if they had been taught something of the world into which they were to fling themselves to sink or swim. But the stuff which they received in place of such knowledge had no life and growth in it for the simple reason that it could not be converted into practical efficiency. They felt oppressed by the weight of this unnecessary encumbrance and were naturally disinclined to add to it by a more intensive study of the subjects prescribed for their examinations.

The strength of the educational system lay in the fact that it introduced to the Indian mind the great ideas in Western literature and the principles of physical science. But in endeavouring to appro-

heap scorn on the old indigenous schools of learning for teaching their students about seas of treacle and seas of butter', but after all it is not much improvement to substitute for that 'The London Chatham & South Eastern'. A case similar though not equally bad is the prescription of Greek and Roman History for the Intermediate Examination in Arts. An option surely ought to be allowed for the benefit of ordinary students, but this is probably not done because it will add to the work and therefore to the expense of affiliated colleges.

expected for instance, that teachers and students would recognise at once the importance of a higher proficiency in English than had been usually attained. But where was the inducement for a more thorough command of this difficult language? The blankness of the prospect that opened before the majority of our graduates was certainly not favourable to a passion for excellence. People who were nothing if not critical might laugh at their slovenly incorrectness and set it down as a sure mark of superficial training. But they were not prepared on that account to revise their own estimate of the acquisition as they knew full well that in the weary round of duties of the toil worn drudge there was not much scope for the appreciation of greater elegance and accuracy. Their lack of general information was another theme for depreciatory comment. But much of what they learnt at school and college had only the remotest relation to their environment and no obvious bearing on their life.* And no special dis

* An extreme case will serve to illustrate this statement. It is taken from the Right Reverend Henry Whitehead's *Indian Problems in Religion, Education and Politics*. While commenting on Macaulay's cheap fling at the Hindu poet's conception of the universe the Bishop says: "A visitor greatly interested in education when he arrived in India two years ago was astonished and amused to find that in the first school he visited Indian boys were being taught the names of English railways. And he was more astonished still to find that the managers and teachers of the school saw nothing funny in it. It was all very well for Macaulay to

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priate these priceless treasures our undergraduates had to overcome the difficulty of a foreign tongue, the obscurity of the setting as well as the unfamiliarity in many instances of the illustrations. And if while handicapped in this fashion they failed to undertake a thorough study of idioms and accents with a view to attain faultless accuracy in composition and speech surely their shortcomings should have been excused by critics who had seldom shown an equal facility in acquiring languages other than their own. Besides from a cultural point of view the thing of supreme importance was that the new thoughts and sentiments should kindle into living fires in their minds and not that their form of expression in English should be beyond cavil. Both form and substance had been mastered indeed by an earlier generation of Indian graduates. But they had been sustained in their arduous effort by the encouragement given to them as interpreters of modern culture to their benighted countrymen. The situation however had greatly altered since then and it is not strange that Indian students in the closing years of the nineteenth century were unmindful of form and finish while their hearts recoiled at the thought that they might have to drift through existence like leaves blown before the wind.

It has been said that the longing for a degree was never the main cause of the spread of western education in Bengal but that behind this selfish motive there was always a vague and obscure feeling

that the new knowledge might provide the law and impulse required for social regeneration, political unity and economic progress. There was very little, however, in the scheme of this education or in the opportunities that it secured for its recipients which might justify this uncritical faith in its possibilities. The first Indian graduates had postured, indeed, as reformers in various departments of life, and they had reasons for being proud of their responsibilities if not of their achievements. But no such proud distinction could be claimed by the thousands of students who had since then left the university with the hall-mark of a degree. And if there was sometimes a passing ebullition of a wider interest than a narrow self-regard in the minds of the ordinary graduates, it was immediately set down as sentimental nonsense in the light of the realities of their existence. It was obviously not given to them to transform and fashion their environment which they were told was responsible for their weakness and poverty. But while any comprehensive effort at reconstruction was clearly beyond their opportunities and powers, there was ample scope in their humble sphere for social service and local patriotism. Here, however, their education was at fault. They learnt too little of the life around them, of its material interests and spiritual aspirations, of its difficulties and distinguishing features to be able to work to some purpose among their neighbours.

The equipment with which they left the univer-

sity appeared therefore inadequate from every point of view. It was not a fine capital to start life as business with on their own account nor was it such as might enable them to hold out their hands in a spirit of comradeship and helpfulness to their ignorant countrymen. And yet it was sought as conferring some sort of distinction and furnishing the passport to employment under Government or in the learned professions. The distinction was not indeed striking and the prospects were not very bright in the dingy office and in the crowded ranks of teachers and lawyers. But economic pressure and the desire of rising in the social scale impelled increasing numbers to qualify for these avocations by devoting long years to the study of subjects which had no obvious bearing on their life. They did so because the extreme simplicity of the educational arrangements provided no other outlet for their ambition. There were however no illusions in the matter: the literary training prescribed and tested by the university was recognised as the orthodox course only because it gave them just a chance of being independent of charity or accident. To men whose expectations had thus shrunk to modest dimensions a scheme of educational reform which aimed at a higher standard of proficiency could not be very welcome. They did not want more of light unless it could help them to find better food and clothes and lodgings for themselves. It was no doubt an erroneous and degrading view of what university education ought to

achieve. But the true academic spirit had never been properly cultivated, while a number of circumstances had combined to associate a narrow practical object with the theoretical knowledge that formed the stock-in-trade of the educated.

Besides, instead of a variety of educational courses with more or less divergent ideals, there was a uniform mental drill for men who differed widely from one another in their aptitudes and their outlook on life. Hence reforms which might have been beneficial to one set of students were likely to dishearten others as imposing needless restraints in the pursuit of their ends or as ignoring factors of education which had a special significance in their eyes. There were among them some who were hardly cut out for the rough and tumble of ordinary life and who wanted to ripen in learned leisure apart from the unsympathetic world of practical affairs. They needed above all a many-sided theoretical training and freedom from the cramping influence of too frequent examinations to prevent their intellectual life from disintegrating into a very limited number of special interests. But they were vastly outnumbered by men who regarded education as a competitive struggle of which their after-life was to be an exaggerated continuation. They were naturally solicitous about acquitting themselves at the earliest opportunity, but the motives that prompted them were not far removed from the hard materialism of the jostling crowds in an overgrown modern city.

Among them again some looked for quick and conspicuous success in service or profession while others felt or feared that they were venturing beyond their power and yet decided to take their chance at the examinations in preference to the uninviting certainties of a career outside the recognised avenues to employment. These formed the bulk of the student community and they required more than anything else a good working knowledge of English and of those subjects which were not altogether unrelated to the kind of service that they might be called upon to render to their employers and to their countrymen. So any system of education in which the practical necessities did not take precedence of the intellectual could not be much to their taste. They had measured and mapped out their common place life and its possibilities and frankly recognised that there was no scope in it for high hopes and important responsibilities. They looked askance therefore at the attempts that were being made to raise the standard of proficiency in theoretical studies.

There was also within this class a growing consciousness of the fact that the public services and the learned professions could not continue to absorb all who were leaving the portals of the university with the necessary passports. So many of them would have been glad to learn how to stand on their own feet and to do good and valuable work in the way of industry and commerce for which society

might thank and pay them. But the training could not be very attractive unless it bore the orthodox academic stamp, for university education had made its way into the social structure and established there a warrant of precedence which those who cared to get into good society could not afford to ignore. Thus a diversity of courses under the auspices of the university could alone suit the needs and potentialities of a community which was still in the rapid transition. And no educational reform could be thorough or widely popular which did not accept this necessity as the fundamental principle of organisation. The reformers hoped to spread abroad by their measures a true conception of the value and uses of knowledge. But they do not seem to have sufficiently stressed the fact that for the ordinary student the only real knowledge was that which he could convert into practical power.

A choice of courses was provided, indeed, at the intermediate stage by the new regulations of the Calcutta University. But it was still entirely in the theoretic field and was designed to enable students who aimed at degrees in science to specialise early in scientific subjects. The bifurcation was justified by a reference to the example of the University of London, but probably it was not in accordance with the principles of modern education to allow any class of students to proceed to the highest degrees without an elementary knowledge of physical

science * Save for a little mechanics which again was to be an optional subject, no provision was made for instruction in it at the secondary stage, and it was quite possible for Arts students to avoid it altogether in their subsequent academic career. Moreover, this possibility became a disconcerting reality in the case of many of them owing to the circumstance that scientific instruction was so costly that few colleges could provide it for their arts as well as science students. Another feature of the new scheme was that history could be eschewed even by the former at every stage of their education. Yet it was a study of history and of English literature that had stirred the still waters of oriental self-complacency and led people to realise that excellence consisted not in resting and being but in growing and becoming, in a perpetual advance, that is, in intelligence and power.

The exclusion of the classical languages of India from the list of compulsory subjects for the Intermediate Examination in Arts was also unfortunate. It is difficult to overrate their importance from a cul-

* The course at the Intermediate stage had included English, a classical language Mathematics, Physics Chemistry, History and Logic before the Regulations came into force. But it had not been absolutely necessary to pass the examination in some of them. The framers of the Regulations seem to have thought that instruction must be useless unless it was followed by a searching test, but this was an error, for even the ordinary student had profited by his introduction to Logic and Physical Science.

tural point of view for those who aimed at a purely literary training. For while history and the gems of English literature were valuable as furnishing the impulse to change and movement, equally valuable were Sanskrit and Arabic owing to their conservative influence without which change could not be progress. And there was no reason for assuming that the lessons which they could teach might be learnt equally well elsewhere for in the higher realms of literature, language is not merely the dress of thought but serves also to control its physiognomy and organisation. The multiplicity of options was, indeed, an advantage and was appreciated as such by the generality of students. But it should not have been extended so far as to enable them to eschew subjects which could not be neglected without prejudice to the mental and moral discipline which they needed as Indian students.

Freedom of choice was allowed, of course, as a necessary condition of thoroughness. But it was carried to unwarrantable lengths in certain directions with the result that it defeated the very object which it was expected to attain. Such, for example, was the liberty given to Arts students to take up two out of a number of subjects with no other restriction than that only one of them could be a natural science. For it was often exercised in grouping for the purposes of their examination absolutely unrelated subjects like Sanskrit and Political Economy or History and Botany. It was, indeed, only natural

that inexperienced youths should be guided in their choice not by the desire to secure an organic unity in their studies but by their estimate of the relative difficulty of the different courses. But none the less was the frequency of this unsound principle of selection among them a thing to be deplored in so far as it tended to break up their intellectual life into a number of uncoordinated and transitory interests.

While commenting on the defects of the Regulations it would be unfair however not to admit at once that they formed the first comprehensive attempt to define the conditions which should govern the extension of higher education in the land. Nor is there much reason for doubting that the lines along which it has proceeded under their operation have led to important results. Among these are the remarkable development of post graduate education in the various branches of Arts and Science the interest aroused for the first time in research and the advancement of knowledge the recognition of the legitimate place of the vernacular in education in all its stages and the general acceptance of the principle that the study of natural science cannot be fruitful and thorough unless it is supplemented by experimental work. But as already observed many difficult problems arising out of the economic situation were not tackled in these Regulations and their authors seem to have assumed that a healthy moral tone and atmosphere could be created without a

direct and powerful appeal to the spiritual instincts and aspirations of the students *

Just at this stage the control of higher education passed into the hands of the late Sir Asutosh Mookerjee. He had been for some time the dominant figure in the Senate and the Syndicate, and so all eyes were naturally turned towards him at the commencement of what appeared to be a new phase in the history of the university. But the hold which he retained over its affairs for long years

* Mr H R James ably defends the present system. "The thing to be done," says he, "is so to train boys that they may grow up to be manly, courageous, law-abiding, with just notions of self-respect and of what is due to others." He admits, however, that "it is by no means easy anywhere to bring this to pass through the daily routine of school and college" and that "in India there are hindrances of a very baffling nature." Sir Valentine Chirol's attitude on the question is more decided. He says that "even if the attempt had been made or were in the future made to instil ethical notions into the minds of the Indian youth, independently of all religious teaching, it could only result in failure." But he too is of the opinion that it is impossible for the State to provide the religious training that will be acceptable to Indian parents. The late Sir Gooroo Dass Banerjee thought that "the text-books of students required careful regulation to make them helpful for moral education." (The student will find the question discussed with remarkable freedom and freshness in H R James's *Education and Statesmanship in India 1797 to 1910*, Sir Valentine Chirol's *Indian Unrest* and Sir Gooroo Dass Banerjee's *Education Problem in India*.)

and even after he had ceased to be its Vice Chancellor is less easily explained. Careless onlookers were inclined to attribute it to the glamour of his splendid academic and professional career and of the high position which he held as a judge of the Calcutta High Court. But there were others on the controlling bodies of the university who could boast of similar distinctions and had won them by virtue of talents quite as striking as his. Yet his was without doubt the dominant mind there and he was able in no small measure to indoctrinate his colleagues with his views. The secret of this remarkable success lay probably in the fact that the cause of higher education was the one commanding interest of his life. He had lived in an age of religious, social and political experiments and observed how his countrymen had set up new idols, then shattered them in petulance and then grovelled again to pick up the broken fragments for fresh attempts at reconstruction. The sight must have filled his heart with dismay for it was a spectacle of intolerable futility. But it did more as it gave him the conviction that if efficiency was to be the keynote of their efforts the wastes of ignorance on every side must first be reclaimed. This was his religion and he devoted all the powers of his extraordinary mind to the type of social service which it indicated. Hence he could afford to be firm and hopeful in the centre of a changing world of a world which was strewn with the wrecks of petty

political schemes and the mournful vestiges of picce-meal social and religious reforms. It was the triumph of a powerful and disciplined imagination over narrow creeds and shibboleths that 'had indeed their day, but soon ceased to be.'

To such a man was virtually entrusted the difficult task of putting in motion the machinery of educational reform which had been provided by the Regulations and of determining the speed at which it should be worked. He decided that its operation should be slow so far as improvement in the standard of proficiency and elimination of defective methods of teaching were concerned. And such a decision was quite in keeping with his zeal for the spread of education and his estimate of the difficulties that stood in its way. But about the fitness of that education for the thousands of students who flocked to the university, there was assuredly room enough for a difference of opinion. And since he was responsible in no small measure for the new rules which defined its scope and character, it may very well be asked why he ignored the signs of the times and formulated a scheme which was already out of date in important respects.

Did it not occur to him while standing on the threshold of what appeared to be a new era that a wide variety of more or less specialised courses was needed to offer adequate scope to differences in aptitude of the students and thus to secure a many-sided development of the life of the community?

Or was he unmindful of the fact that for the majority of them the only real knowledge was that which they could turn to account after entering the world? Or again could it have escaped his observant eye that not a few were accepting a purely literary training with important mental reservations which robbed it of half its interest and formative influence? These things which are patent to ordinary men today must have been matters of clear vision to him even then. And yet the fact remains that he could not achieve much in the direction of providing a variety of courses to meet the legitimate aspirations of the clear sighted among the rising generation and to place new and definite goals before those who were still proceeding along the orthodox lines on the old unthinking assurance that they might be led thus to some desired or desirable end. The educational tide was on the turn at the commencement of the present century and a great and comprehensive effort was needed to direct it into healthy and profitable channels. But there was little beyond tentative and inadequate attempts to cut new courses for its reception.

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because he had that glorious personality which could impose itself even on a hostile environment and triumph over obstacles that were insurmountable by others

It is, indeed, unfair to judge him by any ordinary standard of effort and achievement. But we must bear in mind that death overtook him in the midst of his labours and that we have only the segment of an unfinished circle from his hands. The shortcomings of his educational arrangements may be the inevitable defects of a system that remained incomplete, though as having more than a limited objective it stood in obvious need of readjustment and elaboration. One hesitates, therefore to regard it as the final embodiment of his deliberate convictions about the scope and nature of undergraduate training. But no such doubt or hesitation crosses the mind in estimating his services to the cause of advanced study and research. And here it is not enough to say that he powerfully stimulated research, he recreated in this country the spirit that must always underlie it and consecrated it far above any effort of ours to add to or detract from its value by giving currency to the view that the well-being of a people depends as much on the advance of knowledge as on its mere dissemination and that for the individual as well as for the race the discovery of new truths and their application are even more important than the broadcasting of borrowed ideas. The Government of India had it is true, expressed

study for the benefit of those who were prevented by natural inclination or external conditions from entertaining any but utilitarian motives

A more satisfactory explanation of this serious defect may be found in the circumstances which shaped the educational policy of the time. Sir Asutosh Mookerjee's coadjutors were not, indeed, opposed to an enrichment of the pattern, but they were probably not ripe enough for a material alteration of the outline. A better knowledge of English, a more thorough acquaintance with certain subjects and a new interest in branches of learning till then neglected, these were the minor improvements to which they had pinned their faith, while others looked askance at every proposal of reform out of an excessive solicitude for the backward student. Thus the stupendous task of combining in a single system the training of the speculative intellect and of those powers that find their scope in practical life was clearly outside their narrow horizon. And public opinion was not sufficiently explicit about the expediency of such a departure, for while there was discontent with the literary type of education, there was no clear idea of and much less an articulate demand for what should take its place. An attempt to give a pronounced vocational tendency to the courses for ordinary students was fraught, therefore, with complications and difficulties of a peculiar kind. And Sir Asutosh Mookerjee may be held responsible for the omission only

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the opinion that the promotion of research should be one of the objects of the university, and the Regulations had provided for its encouragement by the award of degrees. But pious wishes and even regulations could not have accomplished much without his unremitting personal interest in the advancement of knowledge. Research may have to face in future defects of organisation and the stolid indifference of practical men to its claims. But these are obstacles which it has successfully overcome in other countries, and if experience is a reliable guide, it will not languish here on account of their presence. This was the greatest achievement of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, as it raised the institution in Calcutta from the low level of an examining board with a coaching establishment by way of a new appendage to the rank of a true university and paved the way for the removal of the prejudice that the Bengali intellect could hunt old trails with facility but lacked the virility required for venturing into the hazy world of independent thought.*

The significance of this new departure has been imperfectly appreciated in certain quarters. The present craze for research as the critics of Sir

* It is not implied that research was unknown in Bengal before the days of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee. But the view that scholarship finds its highest vocation in research had its origin in the principles on which he organised the Post Graduate department of the University and in the encouragement which he gave to individual researchers.

Asutosh Mookerjee would designate it, threatens in their opinion to disintegrate the intellectual life of the educated into a congeries of special investigations. They point also to the undoubted fact that the results which have been obtained so far are not particularly striking. But important discoveries are not made to order, and what is wanted and can be provided for is the presence of the spirit that leads to them. Besides, attempts to collate information derived from various sources and to marshal the ideas of others in a new order and for a new purpose, though they are not research of a high order, are often the necessary steps towards it. So whatever may be thought of the intrinsic excellence of the output, it cannot be said to disagree flatly with the sanguine expectations of the promoter of this new temper among scholars. Nor is there any reason for assuming that it is less desirable than that wise receptivity which dresses itself in a borrowed glory and sets an extravagant value on the mere acquisition of knowledge. For even knowledge lives by renewal and rejection of whatever is effete or out of date or out of place. Sir Asutosh Mookerjee was proud of our ancient and priceless heritage, but he knew also how to prize the spirit of ceaseless enquiry that dominated the centres of culture in the West. And so he was no mere champion of traditionalism or even of scholarship, but wanted that the best among his countrymen should be able to offer the old and the new learning in a

happy and fruitful union. Such an ambition is to be judged, of course, not by its immediate results but by its far-reaching consequences. But in the meantime we must not grudge the price that is being paid for the experiment which it has dictated, for it is an experiment with a view to provide better for the morrow of the race than the earlier educational system had done. A cool, calculating spirit may be ruinous in a matter like this, for as in nature so even in the highest departments of human endeavour, all excellence depends on apparent waste, while careful precautions against it can only lead to mediocrity.

It may be doubted, however, if those who engage at present in research are always properly equipped for it by previous training. One feels that its foundation should be broad enough to comprise a wide variety of related subjects in order that the light of other knowledge may be brought to bear on the special study and the special interest may be viewed in its true proportions. But here we encounter once more the weakness underlying the delusive assumption of the sufficiency of a uniform standard of attainments for students who differ widely from one another in tastes and aspirations and of whom some have a genuine passion for learned pursuits while others acquire with irksome toil and ill-disguised repugnance just so much as would enable them to pass muster. It is, indeed, generally supposed that a remedy for this weakness

exists in the encouragement which is offered to intensive study by means of examinations for honours. But there is all the difference in the world between the outlook and methods of students who want to show off at the ordeals prescribed for them and of those who are anxious to lay in a stock of information that may serve as a basis of life long study and research. We arrive thus by another path at the conclusion that differentiated courses are needed for the growth of the true academic spirit as well as of the practical capacity which finds its scope in the ordinary affairs of the world.

The students who join the Arts Colleges may be roughly divided into three classes. There are some among them who hope to rise above ordinary desires and purposes and to develop their passion for knowledge into the master-impulse of their lives. Others seek in education the mental outfit required for success in trade and industry, while a much larger number want to be properly equipped for the manifold requirements in the way of service of the State and of other important corporations. The university may cater of course for all these classes but it must recognise that purely academic courses cannot suit all of them. This important truth, however, has never been sufficiently stressed, and it seems to have been obscured in the early years of the century by the rapid increase in the demand for collegiate education that synchronised with the adoption of the revised scheme of studies.

Hence the opinion gained ground that all that was necessary was that the University should spray out its light in every direction and for all classes of students without pausing to enquire if that light could warm as well as illumine those who received it. But an ominous comment on this view of the educational situation was furnished during the non-co-operation movement in the attitude of the students and of some of the teachers, who stoutly denied the fitness of their training for practical purposes as well as for the development of their inner life in accordance with the best traditions of their race. They had, indeed, striven hard to secure the fruits of the tree of Western knowledge ; but these had turned to dust and ashes in their hands. So they repudiated the idea of encumbering themselves any further with these costly but useless possessions. This wholesale rejection of the new light was, of course, irrational and short-lived. And a reaction set in earlier than might have been expected owing to its association with a political scheme that was predestined to failure. But though students have since returned in increasing numbers to schools and colleges and the educational machinery is once more in full working order, there is still except among the very best a disconcerting lack of seriousness and stability of purpose, the root cause of which must be sought in the narrowness and mechanical rigidity of the system which claims to shape their future.

Whether we regard the magnitude of the end

or the difficulties to be encountered on the way the task at present before the educationist appears to be almost unique in character. Pointed reference was made to the difficulties by the Calcutta University Commission of 1917 when it observed that the problem was not merely academic or intellectual but involved also social political and economic issues of far reaching significance. And it was equally explicit on the urgency of a satisfactory solution in its remark that *steady progress was out of the question for the community so long as the great mass of its intelligent manhood was driven in ever increasing numbers along the same often unfruitful course of study which created expectations that could not be fulfilled and actually unfitted those who pursued it from undertaking many useful occupations*. There was thus no blinking of the responsibility which it shouldered when it undertook to enquire into the condition and prospects of the University of Calcutta and to consider the question of a constructive policy. And it did its work with a thoroughness that was fully worthy of the occasion and of the distinguished men who composed it. Their report is in every sense a masterly performance and one wishes only that the enquiry on which it was based had been preceded by a systematic and detailed census of the employments which were open to educated youths or might be thrown open to them by some measure of readjustment and wise direction. But into the merits of their suggestions

it is hardly necessary to enter here, since they have not materialised except in the creation of the Dacca University which is still in its infancy. The labours of the Commission form as yet only an episode in the history of education in Bengal.

CHAPTER III

A POSSIBLE SYNTHESIS

Our foreign critics with a few exceptions find incontestable proof of the static and inflexible character of our society in the poverty of the results that have been obtained by a century of western education. It is still hampered, say they, in its forward march by the lumber of antiquated traditions and usages. Caste, which is in their opinion the most disastrous and blighting of institutions, continues to check healthy growth and activity."

The institution has been applauded as well as denounced by European observers and while some have contended that it has paralyzed India intellectually and morally by forcing her to occupy her mind with infantile rules and distinctions and to regard them as the most serious interests in life, others are of opinion that she must have lost her arts and sciences and lapsed into barbarism long ago but for this well marked distribution of her people. Its nature and influence are discussed at some length in Pramatha Nath Bose's *Illusions of New India* and F. B. Fisher's *India's Silent Revolution* and Fisher lays his finger on its peculiar weakness in the following remarks. The apologists for caste emphasize the similarity between caste lines and the class distinctions of Europe and America. The essential difference—and it is this which gives caste such a fundamental place in Hindu life—is that whereas in Christian communities religion is opposed to class distinctions and at least theoretically ignores them in

New ideas have obtained, indeed, a certain measure of intellectual assent ; but the rejected clothes of the mind adhere in spite of them, and noble sentiments run off into mere sentimentalism instead of crystallizing in useful reforms. Occasionally an attempt is made to break with the past, but it ends, they observe, in nothing, so that it is like a blaze in the stubble after which all is dark once more.

It is asserted on the other hand by some of our countrymen that western education has untuned our spirituality and destroyed our normal sanity and peace of mind and that we must regain them by quelling the anarchy of hopes and fears generated by modern conditions and by establishing the throne of Reason once more on vanquished will. But for such a purpose, say they, we should lead our own civilised life magically sealed against all sorts of foreign influence.

There is thus acute disagreement among the two

India caste is one of the basic facts of religion. Western class lines with all their faults are based on rather indefinite lines of birth, wealth and sometimes intellectual achievement. The vagueness of these lines in the course of generations gives the social life they dominate a certain elasticity. On the contrary caste distinctions are absolutely rigid. It has ceased, however, to obstruct seriously the free choice of occupations and of the equipment needed for them, and when its transformation is complete under the influence of western ideas it may allow perfect individual freedom while preserving in a general way the advantages resulting from the employment of successive generations in work of the same kind.

classes of observers in their estimate of what we need for our progress. And as often happens in cases of acute disagreement an element of truth may be found in each of the apparently irreconcilable positions. But this is not easily discovered by a comparative study of their merits and shortcomings for while one of them stoutly maintains that all the factors of a happy and rational existence must be sought by us in the culture and civilisation of the West, the other as stoutly repudiates this claim and prefers a similar claim for the culture and traditions of the East. A reliable verdict may be obtained, however, by an examination of the parts which the rival cultures have played in our education.

We have seen how the first students of English literature were hypnotized into the opinions of their European teachers. They thought by infection,

* Henry Derozio was the first high priest of this exotic culture and so his accession to the staff of the Hindu College which took place in March 1823 is a notable event in the intellectual history of modern Bengal. No teacher says his biographer ever taught with greater zeal with more enthusiasm with more loving intercourse between master and pupil than did Derozio during his short connection with the Hindu College. In concert with his pupils he established the Academic Association which met in a garden house belonging to the Singh family in Manicktolla. Poetry and Philosophy were the chief themes discussed. Derozio's attainments in Philosophy were as wide and varied as was his acquaintance with the poets and the dramatists. And in the meetings of the Academic Association and in the social circle

catching ideas and even manners as people catch cold. They were proud nevertheless of their freedom from the irksome restraints imposed by tradition and were only too ready to mistake it for license and to abuse it. Self-realisation came, therefore, to be interpreted by them as no more than self-assertion. It was their conviction that the veil had fallen at last from their eyes and that they had seen the light. So in that light they decided to examine the externals of their ancient civilisation, especially as they were profoundly ignorant of the principles on which the superb fabric of Hindu society was based. And since the externals did not satisfy them, they declared unending war against the entire system, against its spirit as well as its forms. It did not occur to them that there might be things in it which were deeper than their doubts. Still less did they realise that among the bewildering complexity of customs and ceremonials there might be some which had a preservative value in so far as they sheltered and kept alive noble ideas and sentiments. And they lacked that gentleness of feeling and behaviour which is the sign-manual of genuine culture. Their one-sided education gave them on the other hand that

that gathered round his hospitable table in the old house in Circular Road, subjects were broached and discussed with freedom, which could not have been approached in the class room.

and these discussions stirred to their very depths the young, fearless, hopeful hearts of the leading Hindu youths of Calcutta."

moral weakness which is fitly called puffing up. Knowledge had come to them, but wisdom had lingered behind. So in their rage for improvement, they tore and hacked instead of cutting clean. Many-sided reform was certainly needed in our conservative society and our conservative ways of thinking and feeling, but these men undertook a revolution. It was because they had changed their outlook instead of endeavouring to widen it.

This altered outlook received official approval in the educational policy of Lord William Bentinck, which was inaugurated, as we have seen, by a literary beating of drums and blowing of trumpets in the form of Macaulay's minute. Thenceforth a purely English education with some knowledge of a vernacular which had not yet developed a literature became the vogue with increasing numbers. It released them from the unpleasant necessity of circumstantial thought.* And it enabled them to

* They overlooked in fact many things out of a superstitious regard for western culture. They were right in thinking that the principle on which Hindu society was organised had led to a degrading over-specialisation of the units. But they could not see that the thought of the West had in its turn unduly stressed the rights, real and fancied, of the individual and that its centrifugal tendency was being checked there by the social environment, which derived its tone from Christian morality. Hence they failed to realise that a similar restraining influence was needed in Bengal too as a condition of a truly human existence. Indeed so impatient were they of all forms of restraint that they confounded eccentricity with indepen-

abrogate certain kinds of duty by abrogating as unfashionable the habits and manners in which these

dence and did certain things for no higher purpose than that of scandalising Hindu society. They adopted also the expensive and physically injurious habits of Europeans which ruined them in more ways than one. And while admitting the need of social service they unreservedly condemned the Hindu family system which whatever its defects might be, was based on mutual helpfulness.

There are, says Mr. West, a thousand influences in society to socialise a man, while there is not one which might preserve and strengthen his individuality. Hence he concludes that education ought to lighten this crushing weight and prevent warping and if possible lay a strong foundation of virility without which the restraining influence of the society and State becomes itself unreal. He goes a step further and says that nations like individuals have their defects which are like flaws in the raw material that education ought to remove. "The school must do more than develop the child to be himself, it must develop him to be more than himself, a perfected and supplemented member of his race." Mr. West's observations are just, as indeed are most of the statements in his admirable little book, *Education Selective, Specific, Compensatory*. But the experience of Bengal in the first half of the nineteenth century proved that the right of the individual to strike out a line for himself has its limits, that impatience of control is often a source of weakness and that education in so far as it is discipline ought to enable him to submit loyally to the general will except where such submission appears to contravene the laws of morality or to stand in the way of genuine progress. It does not however, affect Mr. West's position for a man cannot become 'a perfected and supplemented member of his race' by surrendering all that marks it off from other races.

had been clothed. But the sinister influence of the new policy was particularly felt by the champions of the ancient learning of the land. They had lost the spirit of enquiry and the strength of mind required for looking phantoms in the face, and their fugitive and cloistered virtue had proved an inadequate outfit for life under modern conditions. What they lacked might have come to them from a critical study of their own literature and of modern thought. But they required every species of encouragement for undertaking such an arduous task, while a scornful neglect was all that they received from the rulers.

The glaring excesses of the votaries of western knowledge disappeared in the course of a few years. There was the sobering influence of time. Aspiration had seen only one aspect of the alien culture, but possession revealed many all of which were not equally attractive. Hence with increased study and reflection came increased diffidence. But the credit of this disenchantment belongs mainly to the great literature to which they were introduced. It gave them the idea of nationality. It inculcated self-respect and brought home to them the difference between this virtue and the disintegrating pride of caste. Thus educated Bengal became united and self-conscious as it had never been before. And as it had very little in its present to be proud of, it naturally turned to the past and to its bequest of

customs, ceremonials and traditions, to which a distant respect came to be paid once more

Here do we find the origin of the nationalism of modern India. It was a new principle of organisation quite suited to the circumstances, which we got from the West. But it should have been strengthened and supplemented by the bonds of our time-honoured culture and faith, which alone could uphold our society. This, however, was not attempted, for though lip-homage was paid to them, yet the educated continued to seek formative and regulating principles entirely in the life and thought of the West. A real synthesis of the two cultures based on thorough and accurate knowledge was the need of the hour, but a clumsy make-shift was resorted to instead, in which a conventional deference was paid to one of them while the other was tacitly accepted as the only source of inspiration and guidance.

A compromise of this sort was a serious weakness, and its consequences became manifest when political aspirations and economic difficulties transferred the privilege of spell-binding to new hands. The utterances of our leaders suffered from a glut of promises as they unfolded before our infatuated vision the prospect of a restoration of our glorious past, though few among them could say what that past had been and to what particular epoch of history it had belonged. It served a useful purpose, however, because it gave us a new sense of solidarity

and a new motive for reconstruction. But the gain was slight and transient while it was attended by a serious drawback. For the need was obscured by their poetic appeals of a careful and systematic readjustment of our life in all its phases to the complex conditions whose binding force it was vaguely feeling from hour to hour. It was natural that they should seek to establish the new nationalism on our ancient civilisation though they knew very little of it. But as their programme of revival could not be securely based on mere imagination they lacked that clearness and directness of aim which a just estimate of the civilisation of which they spoke in rapturous accents might have given them. When moreover their pointless ecstasies proved ineffective they represented this civilisation as the complete antithesis of what went by that name in the West. They spoke with contempt of the materialism of the latter and characterised its literature as the mere idealisation of a crude and gross plutocracy. But in doing so they followed a suicidal course for behind the materialism which they denounced there was a large amount of social service of philanthropic effort and of civic activity which might have been held up as worthy of imitation while the literature which they depreciated contained among baser materials the works of teachers who are justly regarded as having important messages for the entire human race. Their tirades however rang with a clear and arresting note in the peculiar circumstances of the time.

and owing to the patent defects of our educational arrangements

There are signs today of a fresh change of attitude. And it may be expected that the pendulum having swung far enough to the two extremes of westernism and orientation will now settle down at a centre of repose. But this it will not do of itself, for it is the nature of great economic and political forces that unless properly controlled and utilised, they flow with a tidal sweep one way or the other and prevent society from attaining that normal poise which is a condition of healthy life. But where may we look for wise direction in the matter? It is difficult for those who are engaged in propaganda to preserve a sense of proportion and to keep steadily in view distant ends. They have rendered, indeed, a valuable service in bringing home to us the need of social reform as a preliminary step towards the realisation of worthy political and economic ends. But this, as we have seen, is not enough. We require to be taught as a living faith based on accurate knowledge that do what we may we cannot break with the past and that if we know how to proceed about this business, we may win from it things that give life and growth. And we require to be taught also in the same way that the principles and forces which made it have only limited applicability in the present hour, so that it is necessary to look abroad in order to profit by the experience of other nations. But these lessons can

become integral portions of our existence only through an education of the right type an education which will endeavour to give us all that is best in our culture and to combine with it whatever is valuable in the thought and practice of the West

An attempt has been made in previous chapters to indicate the proper place of Sanskrit and Arabic in a scheme of liberal education for Indian students That place has never been assigned to them And the omission has led to a certain vagueness of conception with regard to the obligations of the educated to their society which paralyzes energy or wastes it in fitful and half hearted efforts at reform For we cannot introduce useful changes in the social structure without knowing exactly what it is that stands in need of renewal or transformation Present abuses may be due to inherent defects of the original system or to deflections from the right line under the warping influence of the accidents of history And to complicate the social pattern by the introduction of new principles may be unwise where a reversion to the old order is all that is required

There is it has been said a superstition in avoiding superstition when men think to do best if they go farthest from the superstition formerly received therefore care should be had that (as it fareth in ill purgings), the good be not taken away with the bad Well meaning observers think that we should be able to offer our ancient traditions and our new knowledge in a happily blended union

But the traditions as we have them are surely not reliable guides unless we are able to trace their genesis and their mutations under the stress of changing conditions

The difficulty of the proposed synthesis is enhanced by the circumstance that the network of relations which make up our society is regarded by the people at large as a matter of orthodox determination^{*} Religion enters into everything and hallows with its sanction the meanest details of our daily routine Hence a careful study of the literature in which this religion is enshrined must be the first step towards a systematic reform, and a disinclination to take the necessary step cannot be justified on the ground that its popular forms consist of ceremonials and observances that sterilise spiritual life It may have lent itself to many corruptions owing to its intricate and comprehensive adaptation

* The difficulty in Bengal is not unlike that which has been experienced in Bombay, and of the latter, the late Mr Ranade wrote in the following manner "One deliberate conviction has grown upon us with every effort, viz., that it is only a religious revival that can furnish sufficient moral strength to work out the complex social problems which demand our attention Mere considerations of expediency or economic calculations of gains or losses can never perva a community to undertake and carry through social reforms, especially with a community like ours so spell-bound^{*} by custom and authority

Only a religious revival a revival not of forms, but of sincere earnestness which constitutes true religion can effect the desired end "

to our varied activities and interests. But that is one more reason why it should be thoroughly studied by those to whom the community looks up for enrichment of its faith and thought. There is, indeed, no other way of separating the spiritual ore from the dross of outworn customs and rituals. The present eccentricity of beliefs and confusion of principles may preclude the adoption of a uniform course of religious instruction, but they should not forbid the inclusion of the higher branches of Sanskrit learning among the compulsory subjects of study for those Hindus who aspire to a liberal education †

Doubts, however, are entertained in certain quarters about the expediency of devoting long years to the study of a literature which appears overlaid with puerile substitutes for science and history. But as a Christian bishop observes, to discredit it on the ground of these alleged imperfections would be quite as reasonable as for Christians to condemn the Bible off hand as useless for all purposes of educa-

† In an interest paper on *The Problem of Higher Education in India* the late Professor Benoyendra Nath Sen observed that the study of Plato and Spinoza and Berkeley and Hegel could never have that living interest for Indian students which alone might lead to a genuine philosophical culture unless it was connected with the study of the Upanishads, the Sankhya and the Vedanta, and that the study of Philosophy like that of Literature could have no other effect than that of killing the intellect if it was divorced from life.

tion because of the age of Methusaleh, the tower of Babel and Jonah in the belly of a fish."* In fact, our indifference towards it shows a lack of spiritual vision which is matched only by our arrogant claim to a more exalted spirituality than that of other peoples on the face of the earth. For as the writer just quoted says, in this literature alone may we get a first-hand and reliable knowledge of the age-long quest of our ancestors after truth, their profound speculations on the mysteries of the universe and human life, their earnest seeking after God, their yearning for communion with Him and implicit faith in His love. And we have no reason to be proud of this unique intellectual and spiritual heritage so long as we are not prepared to take stock of it.

Our delinquency in this matter is pernicious as well as contemptible, and it has its apportioned curse in the tendency of society to collapse into a heap of incoherent elements. The principles, habits and convictions which have so long held it together are giving way one after another, and no comprehensive effort is being made to reorganise it on a base that will be both broad and deep-set. Indeed, it cannot be made so long as we do not turn to our ancient literature with a view to life and practice and not simply in the way of a refined self-indulgence. For an alien culture, whatever its merits

* The Right Reverend Henry Whitehead, D.D., in his book, *Indian Problems in Religion, Education and Politics*

may be cannot because it is alien furnish that exacting reality which imposes duties defines relations and demands sacrifices, while it is apt to foster a weak passion for forms and conventions that have no analogues in our environment. These forms and conventions have lost no doubt much of the charm which they once owed to novelty, but we are still far from relating naturally and powerfully to our desire for solidarity and progress the valuable ideas that were accidentally associated with them.

A new unifying principle has been sought in the political sphere. But here too the absence of clear direction is revealed in the instability of political purpose and the pettiness of party dissension. In fact all our activities in this field are in a lower key of moral feeling and principle than would be justified by our ancient ethical code. Besides, the opinion is gaining ground among certain sections of politicians that the end may justify the means in dire disregard of our highest ethical teaching which declares in no uncertain voice that man's intelligence and reason are confined to the determination of instant duty, the end being in other hands than his. There are signs indeed on every side of a disposition to place the whole edifice of excellence on the narrow and shifting ground of expediency, and some of our leaders have not hesitated to play to the gallery by intemperate speech and action while our educated young men have shown a readiness to yield to incitements to collective hysteria.

Political advance is certainly desirable. But to be real, it must be secured by other methods, as the false glare of evanescent feelings and desires can not guide us to it. As things are, there is an element of spectacular artificiality in our sentiments and professions as well as in our achievements and failures. And even our new interest in our ancient culture and faith is not free from this taint, for while no serious effort has been made to renovate them, the dogmatic assertion of their superiority has been used as a fulcrum on which to rest our lever for a political uplift*. It is a preposterous course to say the least, for we cannot readjust our loyalty to them so long as we are unable to form a just estimate of their merits.

Again, their study is of vital importance today, if for no other reason, at any rate for laying the axe at the root of what goes by the name of Hindu revivalism. It is a parasitic growth which is crushing the life out of the parent stem while seeming to protect it. For the forms which it has assumed afford effective shelter to crouching prejudices and effete institutions and thus obstruct necessary and even urgent reforms. One of them presents the mirage of unsifted traditions as a divinely appointed

* Mr H R James refers to it when he speaks of the weak tendency to compare western materialism to its disadvantage with the assumed spirituality of the East*. But the tendency is weak only because it is not fortified by adequate knowledge.

order for the growth and vigour of the Hindu mind and upholds all that obtains in our society on the postulate that it must be in conformity with principles of eternal validity thus *fitting* arguments to practice in a reversed order. The other plays fast and loose with the integrities of experience by reading or misreading western thought into our uncoordinated and misty beliefs and professions and thus glossing over what is ugly or out of date in them. And in either case we are committed to a social and educational ideal which obscures the need of facing the situation with courage and manliness by presenting our ancient culture and all that it stands for in terms that may harmonise with modern life and its conditions. It is not strange therefore that belief and practice are with us wide asunder as the poles.

For these defects the superficiality of our interest in our ancient learning is in a large measure responsible. Except where primitive peoples are concerned or where a political catastrophe ends in the complete overthrow of the established order a foreign culture may furnish the temple but not the deity that is to be worshipped in it. For that we at any rate have to turn to our historic past or rather to the literature in which all that is of enduring value in it has been enshrined. Our failure to do so has left a core of unreality in our apparently virile nationalism. Our leaders profess a distant and qualified respect for our ancient culture but are seldom

at the pains to appreciate it properly or to free it from the excrescences that retard its general acceptance. Hence its highest messages are in glaring contrast with the spotted actuality of present-day Indian life, its pettiness and narrowness in certain respects and its extravagance in others. It is for the scholar to interpret those messages for us, but his services are not much in request owing to our political pre-occupations which unduly stress only those aspects of social and ethical reform that appear to subserve political ends. The shifting, however, of the centre of our interest cannot change the laws under which alone true progress is attainable. It is not merely or even mainly by the reproduction of the political institutions which have been the outgrowth of the experience of centuries of striving for ordered freedom in the West, but also by a serious and sustained effort to regain the full stature of our spiritual manhood that we can come to our own again. If we desire the restoration of our glorious past, we must bid the dead virtues live once more and develop other good qualities which are demanded by our present circumstances. Hinduism has to be revived and for that object reformed, for revival cannot mean to-day the 'reinstatement of dogma in its old pre-eminence'. Such a task, however, cannot be undertaken before there has been a patient and sympathetic study of our ancient literature.

Its importance is brought home to us once more when we take stock of our literary activities and of

the results obtained by means of them. We have probably good reasons for being proud of the flowering of our vernacular literature. But candour demands the statement that even today it is just as remarkable for what it lacks as for what it possesses. The severer branches of study remain unrepresented in it, inspite of a growing interest in them. The chief difficulty of course is the absence of suitable terminology. But while so much is waiting to be done we sit with folded hands as if the needed materials could drop from the clouds. Look at what Japan has done in this direction how she has adapted her language to the manifold purposes of modern life by drawing largely on Chinese roots and coining appropriate words from them.* We

* See *Japan and Its Educational System* by Syed Ross Masood from which the following sentences are taken.

In spite of being compelled to use a very unwieldy instrument for the conveyance of all kinds of modern knowledge Japan has overcome all the difficulties in her way. Her first task in this direction was naturally that of coining the equivalents of western scientific terms and this she did with the help of her scholars. The system on which they proceeded was to borrow a root from the Chinese language to denote the general idea intended to be expressed and then to combine with it other roots till the exact idea aimed at was obtained.

For instance having selected the Chinese word *den* which means lightning the Japanese began to construct modern words with it as the root. The word *Ki* means exhalation so they at once coined the term *denki* to mean electricity. Similarly they coined *denwa* for telephone *wa* meaning conversation and *dento* for electric light to meaning lamp and so on and this process still continues.

need only tap Sanskrit in the same way, for its resources are not inferior to those of Chinese. And, indeed, no other course is open to us, for the genius of our language will forbid the wholesale importation of English or Greek terms.

Thus from whatever standpoint we look at the educational problem, Sanskrit vindicates its claim to an honoured place in a scheme of higher studies for Hindu Arts students. But an equally honoured place must be assigned in the present state of our mental and moral development to English literature. What it has done for us has been repeatedly dwelt upon in the pages of this book. It has quickened in our race faculties which had for long centuries rusted in disuse. It has given us a new outlook and bred in us an eager sincerity of social feeling. The vernacular literature in which the intellectual fire of our day burns and quivers is in no small measure indebted to it. And if these gains have been attended by serious drawbacks, the fault cannot be laid at its door, nor is it chargeable with the failure of hopes which a just estimate of its scope and probable influence could never have authorised. But whatever its limitations may be from our point of view, there can be no doubt that it is capable of helping us on the way to progress, if its disconnected messages are properly correlated with what in the way of guidance and support we get from our own classics. He must be a bold prophet who will undertake to cast the horoscope of India's future. But

there is certainly not much risk in predicting that this future lies no more with people who are wilfully ignorant of modern thought than with those who have definitely turned their backs on the past under the impression that it can have no inspiring lessons for them. For inspiration and strength we must, indeed, always turn to it, but we should also bear in mind that there is a stiffness in its strength which has to be cured by excursions into the realms of western learning and speculation.

Western literature is understood here in a comprehensive sense so as to include western history and western philosophy. The claims of the latter to our attention are readily acknowledged because the Indian mind with its reverence for abstract truths can always appreciate the quest of ultimate principles wherever it is undertaken and from whatever standpoint. But the utility of a study of western history is not so easily allowed, and some of our teachers do not hesitate to ascribe to it a positively sinister influence on the ground that its gospel is that of an intense nationalism fortified by implications of hatred and injustice to others. Some of the historical works are no doubt uninspiring annals of battles which proved nothing and settled nothing, of conquests which ended in merely shifting the boundaries of States on the map, and of treaties which meant no more than a sullen pause of arms.* But the best of them are written in a differ-

* The late Sir GURDAS DAS BHARJEE had probably works

ent spirit and they form an appreciative chronicle of what our fellow-creatures have done and suffered in other parts of the globe to improve the lot of man, to multiply his material resources, to extend the sphere of his freedom and to widen his outlook on life. History thus conceived cannot be unprofitable study, and we need it to take us beyond the close walls within which we have for ages run our narrow career of speculative and practical activity.

After what has been said it is hardly necessary to defend literary studies against the aspersions of those who imagine that they are no longer useful and that our allegiance is now due to physical science and its applications. But if a defence were needed, I would not offer the apologetic plea that the same intellectual regimen may not suit all classes of students but take my stand on the proud position that so long as we have that inconvenient thing which is variously called reason, self or soul, literary studies must continue to be of supreme interest to us because they are capable of satisfying our highest aspirations. Science, it is true, is capable of satisfying them in as full a measure, for its mission as understood by its best students is not primarily to

of this class as well as poetry of a certain kind in view when he wrote.—"A large part of the world's attractive literature, which is the work of the vigorous infancy and adolescence of our race when men were prone to quarrel (they have not alas! improved much yet), in extolling patriotism and heroism, really teaches hatred and cruelty to our neighbours"

outwit Nature for the benefit of man but to examine the bewildering complexity of phenomena and to arrange them into a consistent and intelligible order of the universe. Such an ambition stimulates the intellect and chastens the heart. But no such effect can be attributed to the scrappy scientific education which enables the student to earn an ordinary degree.*

It follows from what has been said that the course for students who aspire to scholarship ought to be more comprehensive than it is at present. On the Arts side it should embrace English Literature, English and Indian History with Political Economy

* But does it improve his prospects in life in the ordinary sense? Facts do not seem to warrant an answer in the affirmative, and the following is an estimate of his chances' by a distinguished Professor of Science

"An ordinary Science graduate," says Dr J C Ghosh of the Dacca University, "is generally stranded after obtaining his degree because there is no demand for his services in the profession of teaching or in the industries which are mostly in the hands of foreigners. He has little chance of going up for the M Sc degree in science subjects, as the accommodation both in the universities of Calcutta and Dacca is very limited. And his age acts as a handicap in professional studies like those of Engineering and Medicine."

The chances of the ordinary Arts graduate are still slightly better than his. So there is hardly any reason for assuming that the B Sc course offers a better training in any sense than the B A.

as an adjunct, Sanskrit or Arabic and the Vernacular and Western as well as Hindu or Muhammadan Philosophy † For science students, a course of similar thoroughness will be attained if the subjects are Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and one of the more modern sciences such as Botany, Geology,

† Any course will appear unduly heavy to the student who is not in earnest, who wants to take the shortest and easiest road to a degree and so need not aim at honours. But the course which was taken by the first Bengali students of western learning was much heavier than the one outlined here and they attained no small measure of proficiency in it. The following is a list of the subjects and books which members of the first class of the Hindu College were expected to know when the late Raj Narain Basu was a student there. It is not complete as the books prescribed for the study of mental and moral science and the vernacular are not given, but it is enough for purposes of comparison.

English Literature—Bacon's Essays, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, *Lear*, *Othello* and *Hamlet*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, *Lycidas*, *Comus*, *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso* and Sonnets, Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, *Rape of the Lock*, *Eloisa to Abelard*, *Elegy on the Death of a Young Lady* and *Prologue to the Satires*, Young's *Night Thoughts* and Gray's *Poems*. History—Hume's *History of England*, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Mitford's *History of Greece*, Fergusson's *Roman Republic*, Elphinstone's *India* and Russell's *Modern Europe*. (We are told that the unabridged editions of Hume and Gibbon were prescribed and that the History course was made up of 36 volumes.) Mathematics—Euclid, Algebra, Plane and Spherical Trigonometry, Analytical Conic Sections, Differential and Integral Calculus, Calculation of Eclipses, Mechanics, Astronomy, Hydrostatics and Optics.

Zoology or Hygiene and in addition to these the Vernacular in so far as it may be a medium for the expression of scientific truths. These should be the honours courses which capable matriculates with a single hearted devotion to learning may be expected to cover in four years unless their studies are interrupted by an Intermediate examination in text books and subjects other than those that they intend to offer for their degree. If they duly profit by varied study of this type a further course of two or three years may be provided in which they should specialize in one of the subjects that they have previously studied or in a subject which is closely related to any of them. Students so educated may go forth from the university into the world to devote themselves yet more completely to learning and research or they may seek employment under Government or embrace one or the other of the learned professions. But wherever they may be there should be if they have been properly trained a ring of light as it were around them capable of dispelling prejudice and bias and of exposing insincerity and selfishness which skulk about in strange disguises among us.

Depth of culture should if necessary be sacrificed for the sake of breadth at the undergraduate stage. For at this stage we cannot do more than create tastes and furnish the equipment required for satisfactory work in future. Specialisation is no doubt a pre requisite of research but there is an

obvious risk in specialising early owing to the numerous points of contact between different branches of learning. Besides, all are not fitted for undertaking it, while other ways of serving their country or of satisfying their legitimate aspirations are open to men who prize the intellectual life. And we are likely to inflict a permanent injury on these by circumscribing their outlook and their sphere of interest. For the future researcher too there is a certain advantage in varied knowledge and even in knowledge which appears unrelated to his favourite study, as life under modern conditions demands both a concentration of effort on a restricted field for the sake of excellence and a considerable amount of general knowledge in view of its great and growing complexity. Hence it may be desirable to provide a course of lectures, leading however to no examination, in Physical Science for Arts students and in History and Moral Philosophy for those who would devote themselves to the study of scientific subjects. The experiment of supplementing the course for examinations by instruction of this kind has not yet been extensively tried, and so it is too early to conclude that the experiment must fail. Besides, the subjects proposed for such instruction ought to attract unless they are very unskilfully handled, for their most important facts are constantly obtruding themselves on our notice. And an intelligent interest in them without thoroughness and detail in the matter of information is all that is required. But

while thoroughness need not be aimed at here, it should be insisted on in the student's knowledge of English and of the classical language that he may offer, for nothing is more detrimental to advanced study on the Arts side than inaccurate or slipshod knowledge of the media of instruction. It has been justly observed that no good literature was ever properly appreciated by men who lacked a real command of the language *

* The Calcutta University Commission emphasized and probably over-emphasized the need of raising the standard of proficiency in English. But it did not lay equal stress on the desirability of an improvement in the standard of proficiency in Sanskrit. The members were told that Sanskrit was generally regarded as an easy subject and they guessed that this might be owing to its affinity to Bengali though they knew very well that in English universities Anglo-Saxon or Latin and in French universities Old French or Latin were not regarded as soft options. The truth is that Sanskrit is a popular subject because our students have reasons for thinking that they can pass the examination in it without knowing much of the language. Let us take a case to illustrate this statement. The ordinary Bengali graduate turns to English Literature for recreation and enlightenment. Does he ever turn to his own classical literature with a similar object though he is generally loud in his assertion of its superiority? And if he does not is it not due to the circumstance that he cannot understand the simplest sentences without a dictionary and a faithful translation into English or the vernacular? The English graduate translates with ease difficult passages from the Latin poets. How many of our graduates can make out the meanings of easy passages from story books like the *Hitepadasha* without assistance? Their way of thinking and feeling are

But for the majority of students there should be a variety of less ambitious courses with a pronounced vocational character † The need for such a departure presses on us with all the force of an obligation from whatever point of view we look at the educational problem All are not fitted for concentration on the things of the mind in heroic disregard of the solicitations of the commonplace. And even if they were, it would be still desirable to develop in increasing numbers of them those aptitudes that find their scope in industry and commerce For practical considerations cannot be neglected if the community is to grow in economic power We require, in fact, a simultaneous advance on two different fronts But the two types of education

decidedly and even provokingly western owing to their deplorable weakness in this respect which is due as much to defective methods of teaching as to the inadequacy of the standard prescribed And so long as this weakness remains, the synthesis of the two cultures cannot be more than a pious wish The Muhammadan student requires probably a similar improvement in the standard of proficiency in Arabic

† The fourth subject in the present courses should have this character and may with advantage be one of the following.—Book keeping, Office and Business Correspondence, General Business Methods Practical Training in Ordinary English and Technical Training in some small industry with a future

It should be possible, however, for the ordinary graduate to proceed to the higher examination if he duly qualifies himself for it by passing examinations in the subjects which he eschewed at the earlier stage

indicated by our twofold need should have a common ground in order to preserve a just relation between our practical and spiritual interests. The importance of a cultural basis for even vocational training is apt to be overlooked under the stress of the present economic struggle for existence. Such an oversight, however, may intensify the inclination in practical men to sacrifice intellectual and moral well-being to material gain. It is desirable, therefore, that technical and vocational training should be undertaken as far as practicable by institutions which are mainly devoted to a liberal education.

If, however, the university finds it difficult to revise its curriculum, that is no reason why affiliated colleges should not extend their sphere of usefulness by providing alongside of the training required for its examinations some knowledge of those things that have a direct and obvious bearing on our present needs. They have discovered clearly enough that the existing educational arrangements do not equip our students properly for citizenship and livelihood. And so the duty of introducing the needful improvements lies as much with them as with any other organisation in the land. The university never undertook as a matter of fact to provide all that might be required in the way of education, nor did it fetter them completely or limit their outlook when it defined the types of educational activity which it should supervise. Besides, there is an obvious advantage in making a number

of independent beginnings in the way of technical training. The economic needs and resources of the districts within the jurisdiction of the University of Calcutta are not identical, nor, indeed are they equally advanced in respect of general education. Hence their divergent interests and potentialities are likely to be better attended to if local efforts are made in the first instance to meet local needs and these are ultimately co-ordinated in a comprehensive system of technical and liberal education *

* The following observations of Dr P N, Ghosh of the University of Calcutta throw valuable light on this aspect of the educational problem. "Technical education in one place," says he, "is quite different from technical education in other places. The problem which is now before us has been already faced by other people. In the nineties, both in France and Germany there was a superfluity of the so called technical education and there was hardly any opening for these 'Poly-technicians'. Then they began to adjust themselves. For example, in Marseilles, which is in southern France among the olive districts, the University of Marseilles and its constituent colleges undertook the course on oil technology. They taught power utilisation in oil industry, the process of pressing oil seeds, refining and proper boiling of oils and their utilisation in the manufacture of soap, paint, varnish and artificial butter. Lyons situated in the silk growing area of France teaches everything about the culture and rearing of silk worms, the handling of cocoons, spinning, conditioning, dyeing and weaving of silk. Grenoble situate in a locality abounding in paper mills (formerly a home industry in France) has its department of paper technology teaching the technique of paper pulp manufacture and of bleaching and dyeing different qualities of paper. The same procedure has been followed in different parts of Germany, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Switzerland.

The expediency of a departure from the present stereotyped system is generally admitted. Yet we profess a distrust of innovations to conceal our inveterate disinclination to face the responsibilities of an initiative. The risks, however, are of the slightest in an attempt to combine university courses with some measure of training for occupations which our young men may profitably take up after entering the world. It will have to encounter no difficulties comparable with those that stand in the way of introducing moral and religious instruction. Nor are the university examinations so exacting at present as to leave to the students little leisure or inclination for anything else. So a system of training for careers may if wisely devised dovetail with the literary courses prescribed by the university for them.* It is true that a considerable number of students fail to master even these courses. But the high proportion of wastage is due in no small measure to the absence of earnestness on the part of the students. They suspect that their studies may not help them in earning a subsistence. And yet they attempt to take

* The small industries that exist in our province do not require a long and elaborate training for the men who will engage in them with the help of such skilled labour as is available. So separate technical schools like those that are to be found in Western Europe do not seem to be needed just now. Our students again are not so fully occupied in the first and third year classes that they cannot give some time to a simple training of this sort.

up with plausibilities in the absence of anything more substantial in the way of education. But they succeed only imperfectly in playing tricks with their minds in this fashion. Hence there is in too many cases a lack of fixed resolve and of regular and honest work which spells failure even in tests that are not particularly stiff.

It is not inconceivable that the knowledge that they have a definite and desirable object to work for will improve their chances of passing even the university examinations in so far as it will furnish an incentive to systematic work. The habit of thoroughness, when once acquired, is not easily laid aside, and it may go far to remove the listlessness, the faith in makeshifts and the disposition to outwit examiners by anticipating questions, which constitute the student's disease today. It is significant that many of them are leaving the university without a proper appreciation of the advantages under which they have been brought up. It is still more significant that they look forward to their examinations as terrible ordeals which they are compelled to go through for the bare chance of a degree. Their attitude is a serious obstacle to satisfactory progress in knowledge, and paradoxical though it may sound, even an additional course of practical training may instead of embarrassing them create a new interest in their theoretic studies if they learn from it that making a show in examinations cannot be the only object in a student's career. Besides, as it will be

taken by those only who feel that they are equal to the additional strain there is no reason for apprehending that any provision which may be made for it will injuriously affect the present interests and aspirations of the students

But even if it were conceded that an optional course of practical training might prove a distraction in certain cases, we should still provide it in order to give all our students a chance of leading a happy and useful existence. The public services and the learned professions no longer offer it to all of them, and they know it very well. It is the earlier generation that is the victim of ambiguous ideas on the subject. There is much high talk about feeding the hunger of their hearts and the famine of their brains. But the pabulum that is being offered to them is bound to turn to gall and wormwood unless steps are taken to appease at the same time hunger of a very different kind. This disconcerting certainty is, however, not infrequently dismissed from the mind with the convenient reflection that education will create careers for the educated. Indeed, it ought to, but the entire controversy turns upon the observed fact that our present system of education does not facilitate in the majority of cases the wholesome gratification of their legitimate desires. The optimist will probably challenge the accuracy of this observation and even assert that the rising tide of discontent is only a passing phase due to the difficulty of adjustment in a time of rapid progress.

But even if it is true that they have attractive prospects in the old and familiar walks, still a course of vocational training can do them no harm and will probably do them some good if it overcomes their distaste for practical pursuits. If, however, he has made a mistake in setting out his bright vision of their future, then this subsidiary course may enable them to stand on their own feet and to take the world as they find it.

There are other and weightier considerations in favour of such an expansion of the scope of our educational activities. Our unsuccessful students are many of them entering the world with a sense of wrong based on the conviction that the fatal exactitudes of a narrow curriculum have denied them opportunities of developing such talents as they possessed. And even those who are successful feel in the majority of instances that the ground is hollow under them. They are without faith in the present and hope for the future. So they often take shelter in the unmanly conclusion that the world is out of joint, because their little bits of knowledge do not receive instant recognition in it. But no society can progress steadily when such are the outlook and convictions of its educated men. And we shall render a service to the community as well as to them if we modify our educational system in such a way as to enable them to feel that bad as the world is, there is still room in it for useful and profitable work if only they have the necessary outfit for it.

Some of us are inclined to think that if Government and the university have realised the need of a departure from the familiar types of education, they ought to provide for it. But it is just as well that they have not done much in this direction. For provision by them is likely to assume the form of elaborate courses to be taken at one or two costly institutions as preparatory to employment as technical experts in large industrial undertakings. Of such undertakings, however, there are only a few in the land, and those that are in evidence have been averse so far to the appointment of Indians to posts of responsibility and control. Their hesitation may disappear, indeed, in course of time, but even then the field of employment will be narrow and will soon become overcrowded. A much wider sphere of useful and profitable activity may be found on the other hand in the small industries that exist in the towns and in many of the larger villages in Bengal. They have been steadily losing ground for many a year owing to the imperfection and wastefulness of the stereotyped methods of the artisans and the manufacturers.⁴ And their resuscitation must remain

a far-off, adorable dream' unless our educated young men take them up, for brains have to be imported into them if they are to flourish once more. But we are not likely to attract men of the right type to them by prescribing a long, difficult, expensive and exclusive course of practical training. For business has its risks to which the intelligent and the alert cannot afford to be blind like those who are driven into it owing to their inability to earn their livelihood in any other way. The former would like naturally to go in for the widest range of opportunities in order that if they fail in a certain line they might not be lost. And so a system which will offer practical instruction with general knowledge is likely to appeal more effectively to them than one which will undertake to train them simply for a future which must from the nature of things be more or less vague.*

* 'The educational superiority of the school,' says Mr. West, 'is a matter quite beyond parental understanding. Probably the parents are right, for if wider intelligence and skill were needed in the artisan, the artisan would possess it and be able to teach it. The wider training is to produce a worker better than the circumstances demand in the hopes that he will raise his trade. It is a form of education for future needs, it can never appeal to the public. Socially it is an excellent scheme. Where compulsion is exercised, it may be successful. It can never succeed in a voluntary system.' The conclusion drawn here is different from that of Mr. West, but due weight has been attached to his arguments and also to the circumstance that he is speaking here of technical training for sons of artisans and not of the education needed by those who would employ them. See his *Education, Selective, Specific, Compensatory*

Probably the chief obstacle in the way of such a readjustment lies in the vagueness and inconclusiveness of our thoughts on the subject. We are apt to assume that scientific instruction is technical training which it is not, the work of the student of Physics or Chemistry being as much in the theoretical field as that of his fellow-collegian in Economics and History. Then there is the impression in certain quarters that scientific attainments of a high order are required to profit duly by technical instruction. But in no country are the men who embark in business remarkable as a rule for their scientific attainments, though they may know enough of science to value its application to industry and transport. What we require at present is a large and increasing number of educated men who will start new industries on a small scale or revive those that are found to be declining.¹ If ever they outgrow their

¹ Mr West thinks that we shall be relying too much on youthful or parental optimism if we assume that training for future industries will be widely acceptable. And he lays stress on the risks that there are in every attempt "to create a business and one's post therein." But the risks, whatever they may be, are certainly less uninviting than the certainty of a miserable existence which most of our educated young men have to face today in the old familiar pursuits. Moreover vocational education should include besides technical training some preparation for those vocations that are being followed at present. A student of Mathematics or Philosophy or History, who means to earn his livelihood as a clerk or as the travelling agent of a commercial establishment is not likely to be worse off if he knows a little of book-keeping or commercial geography or business correspondence.

modest dimensions and show a tendency to expand into vast industrial concerns, the demand will arise for the services of scientific experts, and the demand may be trusted to stimulate the necessary supply. But the need of the hour is an army of young men who have foresight and pluck as well as some knowledge of the technique of the trades that they will engage in and an intimate acquaintance with market conditions. And such an outfit may be provided by supplementing a general education with a short and unambitious practical course.

The opinion is, nevertheless, gaining ground that our economic regeneration must remain an un-
realised hope and desire so long as up-to-date technical institutions are not started in our country. It is based, however, on an uncritical study of industrial evolution in other lands. We cannot require many institutions of this type so long as we do not make up our minds to encourage production on a large scale. And we cannot make up our minds in this way if we have reasons for suspecting that the necessary industrial organisation may not suit our climatic conditions and the genius of our race. Life in the chawls of Bombay is said to be unhappy and immoral, and life in the mill towns on the lower reaches of the Hooghly has never been much to the taste of our people.* So if we decide in favour of big

* See the *Report of the Indian Industrial Commission*, Chapter XVI from which the following statements are taken.

"The worst type of chawl consists of a two—, three—, or

ventures, we must rely mainly and increasingly on imported labour and face the risk of continued dependence on other provinces for the human factor in production. The lower classes of our society will be benefited only indirectly and to a limited extent by industrial expansion of this sort. But even if it could provide new outlets for them, we should still hesitate to welcome it as an unalloyed blessing, as the concentration of large masses of men in the industrial areas might imperil those features of their domestic life of which they are justly proud.

The industrial history of England is bound to mislead us unless we make due allowance for the peculiar social and economic conditions under which her manufacturing enterprise attained gigantic

four storeyed building, with single-room units either placed back to back or separated by a narrow gully two or three feet wide, usually traversed by an open drain. The rooms, especially those on the ground floor, are often pitch dark and possess very little in the way of windows. The ground floors are usually damp and also very dirty. Water arrangements are insufficient and latrine accommodation is bad, though the latter is being steadily improved. A most insupportable smell hangs round these buildings. We saw a few cases of three families occupying a single room, and numerous indications of the presence of single adult lodgers in rooms occupied by one or two families.

The Report qualifies these statements by the remark that chawls of this type do not constitute more than ten per cent. of the whole and that even in them there are mitigating factors such as 'the habit which many of the occupants have of sleeping out of doors'. Still the picture is dark enough.

dimensions * These were the presence of a large landless proletariat, a superabundance of capital, a well-developed carrying trade and the possession of valuable markets in various parts of the world All these conditions are absent from our economic situation, and some of them we cannot produce by any effort of ours But even if we could create them, we should still feel handicapped by the absence of certain qualities on which more than on external conditions industrial success depends We lack self-reliance and resourcefulness, we do not know how to forestal demand and to provide for possible exigencies, and we have yet to realise that confidence in others begets confidence in us But these lessons are best learnt in managing small undertakings on our own account than by turning a wheel in a big concern

Those who have at heart the welfare of Bengal

* Some of us are only too ready to assume that technical processes which have succeeded in the West will necessarily succeed here, that all that is required is the application of science to our industries But these processes are often intimately related to the peculiar economic conditions of the places where they have proved effective, and there is no guarantee, therefore, that they will answer our purposes Have we not already a number of scientific experts among us, who are not doing well in spite of their careful training in foreign countries? It is said that capital is shy But capital is not always unreasonably so What we require at present is a number of business men who can decide what will suit us and what will not

should recognise at once that no reform is more urgent today than a reordering and enlargement of the educational opportunities of our young men. They are said to form an intellectual proletariat hungry, discontented and inept and as being the ready made victims of plausible palaver. The statement is harsh and unduly sweeping but who will deny that it embodies an important though disconcerting truth? Most economic problems involve as a matter of fact moral issues*. But were it other

* The moral weakness which stands in the way of industrial and commercial progress is a lingering aversion to any thing but soft handed labour. When we speak of technical training we have generally in view well paid *chakris* in big business concerns and so think of long and elaborate courses as preparatory to such appointments. But are we prepared to start such concerns for accommodating our young men? And is soft-handed labour always more intellectual and every way more honourable than work which involves considerable physical exertion? If it is not then our obstinate partiality for it is certainly a defect. And to this defect the Calcutta University Commission pointedly refers in the following words. It is a complaint frequently heard among Bengalis that they are excluded from the most lucrative activities in their own country and that this exclusion is due to prejudice. But there seems to be no tangible justification for this view. No disabilities are imposed upon Bengalis that do not equally weigh upon Marwaris Parsis Armenians and Japanese. The real obstacle is to be found in the strength of the tradition among the educated classes of Bengal which excludes them from practical pursuits. This tradition however is stronger today among men of light and leading than in the rising generation.

wise, we should still recognise the need of so modifying our educational programme as to prevent our young men from feeling stranded because employments are scarce and their emoluments low. This, however, is not to be effected by substituting one set of theoretical studies for another, but by allowing the ordinary student to combine either of them with some measure of vocational or technical training. They have been tried in isolation, and they have not answered all our purposes, nor is it likely that they will. The process of disenchantment has lasted long enough and it should be now complete. Yet when we are required to take thought for the purpose of evolving a comprehensive plan of education, we look around to see what others have done in order to guard against deviations from the beaten track!*

* There is, no doubt, the idea that an affiliated institution should limit itself strictly to the courses prescribed by the university. But no less an authority than the Calcutta University Commission condemned the dull uniformity of our colleges, their lifeless conformity to a type determined by the requirements of the university examinations. And it declared that "diversity of pattern and freedom of development were essential for the growth of schools which might effectively meet the varied and changing needs of the community." This diversity, it may be said, is nowhere more needed than in the kind of development which we have in view. For see what we are likely to get by waiting for the direction of the university. Dr P. N. Ghosh says that he can mention at least half a dozen industries that would have been brilliant successes but have

It has been objected that a scheme of education like the one outlined above overlooks the obvious limitations of the Bengali student's capacity for learning. This excessive solicitude for his alleged weakness is, however, the unkindest cut of all. We have degraded him by unsound methods of teaching and examination, we have given him no definite and desirable object to strive for, we have paid scant attention to his pressing needs in determining what he should learn, and we now complain that he is not within a measurable distance of the goal and that his advance has been unreasonably slow. But if

come to grief because they could not obtain the services of men trained in business methods. We have now got a course for a degree in Commerce, and it includes, (1) Composition in any Indian vernacular other than that of the candidate or in French or German or Chinese or Japanese (2) General Economics (3) Indian Economics, (4) Modern Economic History, (5) Economic Geography, (6) Business Organisation, (7) Inland or Foreign Trade, (8) Elementary Commercial Law, (9) One of the following subjects—Accountancy Banking and Currency Industrial Organisation, Agricultural Economics, Economics of Transport, Public Administration, Public Finance, Statistics and Tariffs. A course like this may enable the student who takes it to speculate on the future of industry and commerce or to indicate the lines along which they ought to develop. But it is certainly not needed to teach him to be useful in any particular line of business. The University aims naturally at a high level of attainments and a few of our students ought to come up to this level. But there are others for whom a less elaborate and more specialised course is required.

he has defeated expectations, the fault lies almost entirely with those who have catered for him. Give him a task worthy of his powers and leading to worthy achievements, and you may be sure that he will not be found wanting. The air is thick today with reports of his intellectual dependence and practical inefficiency. They flatly disagree, however, with the impressions of his teachers wherever they have taken the trouble to understand him. And what those impressions have been and still are may be best gathered from the words of a man whose claim to pre-eminence among the teachers of western knowledge has certainly stood the searching test of time. "It would be wrong in me to omit to state," said Captain D. L. Richardson, "that a teacher of Hindu youth has a singularly easy task to perform. It is impossible to be extravagant in our estimate of the young Hindu intellect. He must be a dull teacher from whom a Hindu student would learn nothing. If I had my own countrymen to teach instead of young Hindus, I certainly never should have been half so successful an instructor as you are pleased to regard me. They are not like the waggoner in *Æsop's Fables* who implored Jupiter to help him to get his waggon out of the deep rut. 'Oh no, my man,' said the God, 'you must put your own shoulder to the wheel.' The native student is always ready to put his own shoulder to the wheel and to save his teacher all unnecessary trouble."

For contents of and some opinions on the author's "History of Land Tenure in England" and "Study of English Theories of Rent." "

See the following pages.

A Study of English Theories of Rent, 1924.

By J Ghosh M A Ph D Principal Ananda Mohan College Mymensingh Pp 281 Rs 4 Messrs Thacker Spink & Co Calcutta

Contents Theory of Adam Smith Theories of Ricardo and J S Mill Theories of Jevons Sidgwick and Marshall Conclusion

A critical estimate has been attempted in these chapters of the views of the leading economists on the nature and causes of rent They contain also some reference to the theories and arguments of American writers on the subject It is hoped that they may be of some interest to the Indian student of Political Economy as there is no branch of his science which is of greater importance to him than that which treats of the origin and true character of the net produce of the soil

A History of Land Tenure in England By

J Ghosh M A Ph D Principal Ananda Mohan College Mymensingh Second edition revised and enlarged 1924 Pp 380 Rs 5 Messrs Thacker Spink & Co Calcutta

Contents Communism Feudalism Customary Tenancy and Money Economy Modern Land lordism and Capitalist Farming War and English Agriculture the Village Community and the Open field System the Ceorls and Villeins Feudalism and the Manorial Economy Enclosures

The book has been written from the stand-point of an Indian and with an eye on the present needs and aspirations of India

A FEW OPINIONS.

I have read the *History of Land Tenure in England* with interest, and think it is a careful and scholarly summary of what is known of a difficult and complicated subject, put in a clear and attractive form. Few books on European History emanate from Indian Colleges, and I have seen very few of them that have given me so much satisfaction as has the one before me

T F TOUR

Professor Manchester University

I have read your *Land Tenure in England* and *English Theories of Rent* with interest and consider them very well done. The presentation is both interesting and instructive

E R A SELIGMAN

Professor, Columbia University, New York

I have examined with some care your *English Theories of Rent* and I have been impressed by its clearness and scholarly quality, and I congratulate you on the work. The *History of Land Tenure in England* is a good companion piece for the treatise on *Rent Theories*

J B CLARK

Professor, Columbia University, New York

Your *History of Land Tenure in England* and *English Theories of Rent*. I observe that you have read widely on both subjects, and indeed seem to have covered the literature bearing on them

F W TAUSSIG,

*Professor, Harvard University, Cambridge,
Massachusetts.*

I have been looking with particular interest at your *Land Tenure in England*. It covers a good deal of ground and its lucid and comprehensive treatment of the subject ought to make it very useful to Indian students in helping them to understand English agrarian problems.

E LIPSON

Professor New College Oxford

The *History of Land, Tenure in England* seemed to me to be on the whole a clear and fair exposition of the subject and likely to be useful to students.

SIR PAUL VINOGRADOFF

Professor Oxford University

A History of Land Tenure in England. The purpose of this book covering the whole history of English agricultural land is to present to students in India a land system other than their own for purposes of comparison. It is valuable both for the interesting survey of the field that it provides and for the new light thrown on well worn topics by this original and independent thinker.

American Economic Review

Cambridge Mass

A Study of English Theories of Rent—The author summarizes the rent theories of Adam Smith, Ricardo, John Stuart Mill, Jevons, Sidgwick, and Marshall and also criticizes them in the light of his own conception of rent. Incidentally he treats of the characteristics of land and capital as factors in production, the law of diminishing returns, and the nature of land income and land tenure, and therefore the book is of great interest and value to the student of land economics and of economic theory. The opinions of other writers, mostly English and American, are quoted in support of or in contrast with

the theories discussed In the last chapter the author gives his conclusions and a statement of his own idea of rent

American Economic Review,
Cambridge, Mass

A History of Land Tenure in England—In this volume Dr J Ghosh gives us an exhaustive history of the development of English land tenure The volume is handy and the treatment of the subject lucid * * * The book helps the reader to make a comparative study of the English and Indian tenures, which will be of immense help to us in understanding the defects and problems of our own agrarian situation

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English Theories of Rent—A History of Land Tenure in England. Dr Ghosh offers Indian readers in these two books a series of studies in English economic thought and agrarian conditions. The one is devoted to a survey of the doctrine of rent in its phases from Adam Smith to Marshall. The exposition is clear, and a final chapter draws conclusions which deserve attention. * * * The other is the second edition of a work which was first sketched out fifteen years ago. * * * The two books indicate great industry and no little skill in unearthing and maintaining views. They are worth the attention of all interested in their subject-matter.

The Statesman